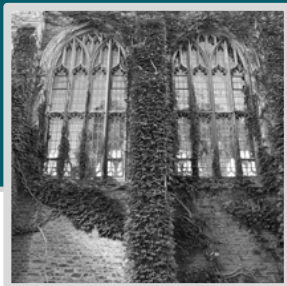


Trends in Adult Education

September 2014



In the following report, Hanover Research provides an overview of adult education trends in the United States, as well as information about several innovative techniques for providing adult education services.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of important national trends in adult remedial and career education. This report is divided into three sections:

- **Section I** examines trends in adult basic, adult secondary, and career and technical education. It focuses on programs designed to help adults complete secondary school qualifications or bridge a high school diploma into postsecondary credentials.
- **Section II** provides an overview of adult immigrant education, noting programs in English as a Second Language (ESL) and workforce development.
- **Section III** assesses the state of educational offerings for adults with disabilities.

SECTION I: BASIC EDUCATION AND CAREER TRAINING FOR ADULTS

KEY FINDINGS

- **Adult education is driven by the needs of the workforce.** The ability to find a better job is one of the primary motivators for students who enroll in adult education. Furthermore, developing a qualified workforce is also important to states and local employers. For that reason, a considerable number of institutions offering adult education work to connect their program to specific employment aims.
- **Despite the benefits that education can provide, participation in adult educational services can be sporadic.** Many adults who are eligible to enroll in these services fail to do so, and those who do often fail to complete their course of study. The most commonly cited explanation for this trend is that it is difficult for students with busy work and family schedules to access educational programs. Other commonly cited barriers include programs being overly long and students losing motivation after failing to see concrete economic gains.
- **Adult education providers have sought to prevent these problems in numerous ways.** Sometimes the fix can be as straightforward as offering programs on nights or weekends. Other institutions have developed more complex curricular innovations. Some of the more popular alternatives to traditional adult education include bridge programs, which combine basic skills training with vocational preparation, and career pathways, which break long programs into smaller, more readily achievable pieces that provide meaningful occupational credentials along the way.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ADULT EDUCATION AND CAREER TRAINING

The importance of Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) has become increasingly clear in recent years. According to the United States Department of Education, in 2010 approximately 12 percent of adults in the United States lacked a high school credential.¹ Moreover, even individuals who have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent sometimes lack basic skills. For example, the nonprofit organization Jobs for the Future estimates that nearly 93 million American workers aged 18 to 64 “lack basic literacy and math skills.”² At the same time, shifts in the nature of the U.S. workforce, combined with demographic changes in the population, have made it so that the skills of many workers do not align with employers’ projected needs.³

¹ “Tapping the Potential: Profile of Adult Education Target Population.” United States Department of Education. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/factsheet/us-country-profile.pdf>

² “Key Facts.” Jobs for the Future. <http://www.jff.org/initiatives/breaking-through#.U3pAnCjb4vQ>

³ SRI International for the Maryland Workforce Creation and Adult Education Transition Council. “Promising Practices Research Briefs: Executive Summary.” p. 1. <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/adulted/aedoc-execsum.doc>

Despite the workforce advantages of education, which include higher lifetime pay and better job security, fewer adults have sought basic education services in recent years.^{4,5} A number of factors likely account for this trend. State budget cuts have likely contributed, as has the cost of some programs. However, the literature on the subject indicates that other issues—particularly access, program length, and student motivation—are far more important.

PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING ACCESS

Accessing educational opportunities can be difficult for adult learners, whose participation is often constrained by pre-existing time commitments such as work and family. Often, educational institutions can address this conflict by offering **flexibility in scheduling options**. As an SRI International report conducted for the state of Maryland found, “if adults have the option of participating in an adult education program during the evening, on weekends, or at other times that do not conflict with work and family commitments, they are more likely to enter adult education programs, attend more regularly, and persist in programs long enough to receive the hours of instruction they need to meet their learning goals.”⁶

Program start dates can also create a barrier to enrolling. Many institutions have found that decreasing the time between when a student decides to pursue their education and when they can enroll increases participation. Thus, many institutions offer **continuous start dates** for their adult education programs. For example, some adult secondary education programs in Texas enroll students in their programs continually. Educational providers who work with students individually or in small groups often prefer this system, seeing “the flexibility and rapid placement as strengths of their programs.” Alternatively, some programs had continuous enrollment but placed students in new classes as they began to minimize disruptions to existing classes.⁷

“If adults have the option of participating in an adult education program during the evening, on weekends, or at other times that do not conflict with work and family commitments, they are more likely to enter adult education programs, attend more regularly, and persist in programs long enough to receive the hours of instruction they need to meet their learning goals.”

⁴ Fitzgerald, J. “College Degree Is Costly, but It Pays Off Over Time.” *Boston Globe*, October 7, 2012. <http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2012/10/06/investment-higher-still-pays-today-economy/GV7iVC5847KP7g6zUvziEM/story.html>

⁵ “A Smart Move in Tough Times: How SREB States Can Strengthen Adult Learning and the Work Force.” Southern Regional Education Board, 2010. p. 5. http://publications.sreb.org/2010/10E06_Smart_Move.pdf

⁶ SRI International for Maryland Workforce Creation and Adult Education Transition Council. “Promising Practices Research Brief 1: Expanding Access,” December 17, 2008. p. 7. <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/adulted/aedoc-sribrief1.pdf>

⁷ “Adult Education Providers: Instructional Approaches and Service Delivery Methods.” Texas Workforce Investment Council, June 2010. p. 11. http://governor.state.tx.us/files/twic/Adult_Education_Providers.pdf

PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING PROGRAM LENGTH

According to the adult education nonprofit Jobs for the Future, “perhaps the most formidable barrier facing adults...with lower than eighth-grade levels of reading and math is the long time it takes to close the gap between their current skills level and the level needed for college work.”⁸ Education researchers Barbara Baran and Julie Strawn agree that the length of remediation programs makes it difficult for students to advance into post-remediation education or skills training. “The length of time it takes students to move through the levels of adult basic skills programs,” they write “is one principal reason for these disappointing outcomes. Most students simply drop out.”⁹ For that reason, it is important for adult educators to minimize the time students spend in remediation.

Institutions have created multiple ways to address this issue. One option is **accelerated learning**, which is also known as compressed learning. These programs shorten the length of courses by presenting material in a more intensive “boot camp” format. Although some would suggest that accelerated programs are most appropriate for higher-skilled or career transitioning learners, there is some evidence that such programs can be successfully adjusted to basic skills programs as well.^{10,11} An alternative means of reducing the length of adult education programs is **aligned learning**, which speeds students to their end goal by integrating noncredit basic skills programs with for-credit vocational or postsecondary programs. By mapping a student’s pathway from remediation through college or career and planning a program around that structure, aligned programs avoid duplication of effort and build bridges to student achievement beyond the GED.¹²

PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING STUDENT MOTIVATION

One of the primary reasons adults pursue education is to improve their standing in the labor market.¹³ However, adult education programs have traditionally not provided consistent support of this goal throughout their duration. This has made it challenging for students to remain committed to their programs in the long term. As explained by Jobs for the Future, students “must invest significant time and resources but there is no economic reward for skill improvement until one earns a full credential. With few incentives and many obstacles along the way, it is far too easy for adult students...to get sidetracked.”¹⁴

For that reason, a prevailing trend in adult educational programming is linking educational attainment with workplace success. This goal can be achieved in many ways. Some institutions use **contextualized instruction** (described more fully below), which combines

⁸ “The Breaking Through Practice Guide.” Jobs for the Future, Spring 2010. p. 2.3.

http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/BT_Documentation_June7.pdf

⁹ Baran and Strawn, Op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁰ “Building Blocks for Building Skills.” U.S. Department of Labor, June 2006. pp. 15-17.

<http://www.cael.org/pdfs/BuildingBlocksforBuildingSkills>

¹¹ “The Breaking Through Practice Guide,” Op. cit., pp. 2.4-2.7.

¹² Ibid., pp. 5.4, 5.17.

¹³ Rothes, A., et. al. “Motives and Beliefs of Learners Enrolled in Adult Education.” *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 112, February 7, 2014. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814012695>

¹⁴ “The Breaking Through Practice Guide,” Op. cit., p. 4.3.

lessons in academic basics with vocational training. Others advise creating smaller credentials, such as certificates or badges, which can be earned in the course of larger programs to provide more frequent, reachable rewards (a system often called “**Chunking**”). Additional “high leverage strategies” for creating “short-term economic payoffs that would encourage students to continue” suggested by Jobs for the Future include:¹⁵

- Offering career exploration opportunities that lead to sound career choices;
- Establishing connections with key labor market actors;
- Participating in regional efforts to retain and recruit businesses and industries.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM PROFILES

CONTEXTUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Contextualized instruction curricula are basic skills programs that allow adults to simultaneously acquire career training. Instead of teaching skills for their own sake, contextualized learning focuses on instructing adults in how to apply the skills they have learned to specific situations. The immediacy of skill use—generally demonstrated by students at live work sites—reinforces classroom instruction and makes the skills seem meaningful. Moreover, the skills taught in contextualized education programs are often not exclusively academic. Instead, they include soft skills and other personal habits (such as decision-making and planning) that are required for success at work.

One example of a successful contextualized education program is **Basic Skills Plus** in North Carolina. Basic Skills Plus was piloted in 2010. Since then the program has grown significantly, and the state plans to make it available in all of its 58 colleges this year.¹⁶ The Basic Skills Plus program has four components that students work through in tandem. These components include Basic Skills, job-specific Technical Skills, more general Employability Skills, and Development Education. Students work in one of 12 career fields and are able to pursue one of nearly 40 in-demand occupations, including nursing aid, industrial technician, electrician, and web designer. In order to be eligible for the Basic Skills Plus program, students must first be enrolled in a traditional basic skills course that results in a high school equivalency degree.^{17,18}

An even better known contextualized instruction program is the **Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)** program developed by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. I-BEST was designed for basic skills students as well as English as a Second Language (ESL) students who have some level of English proficiency. An essential element of the I-BEST program is that it results in a college-level credential from a

¹⁵ Bulleted list quoted verbatim from: “The Breaking Through Practice Guide,” Op. cit., p. 4.2.

¹⁶ “Basic Skills Plus.” North Carolina Community College System. <http://www.successnc.org/initiatives/basic-skills-plus>

¹⁷ “Basic Skills Plus Summary.” North Carolina Community College System.

http://www.successnc.org/sites/default/files/initiative-docs/Basic%20Skills%20Plus%20summary_0.pdf

¹⁸ “Master List of Basic Skills Plus Programs by College and Industry Sector.” North Carolina Community College System. <http://www.successnc.org/sites/default/files/initiative-docs/Master%20BS+%20pathway%20list%20v2.0.pdf>

professional-technical program, a goal that I-BEST's founders believe "result[s] in the most significant gains in the labor market." The evidence for the program's success is strong. For example, ESL students in the I-BEST program during its demonstration period were 15 times more likely to complete job training than traditional ESL students.¹⁹

I-BEST may share its basic goals with other contextualized instruction programs, but some of its aspects are unique. For example, it is team taught. Each course is developed with an ESL/basic skills instructor and a career-skills instructor working in tandem, and the two must overlap in the classroom at least 50 percent of the time.²⁰ Moreover, individual I-BEST programs can vary with one another, depending on the needs of the students. Some I-BEST cohorts are integrated into larger technical skills classes, but others are not. Also, while I-BEST is envisioned as encompassing at least an entire academic year, more than 23 percent last one semester or less.²¹

GED AS PROJECT

A different approach to educating adults with less than high school equivalence is the GED As Project program developed through a partnership of James Madison University and the Virginia Literacy Foundation.²² The GED As Project is a system of teaching/learning for the GED exam that approaches the necessary competencies as a united whole rather than as discrete units. The program is constructed around Learning Projects, which are built out from GED test questions. But instead of simply making students memorize facts or mathematical formulas, the Learning Projects ask students to engage problems that cross over multiple subject disciplines. The students approach the topic organically, applying previously existing knowledge. In this way, according to the GED As Project creators, they "link learning to the experiences, personal growth, and skills encountered in many different areas of our lives."²³

The structure of each Learning Project is a five-step inquiry process consisting of "asking questions, investigating the problem, seeking to understand, sharing with others, and reflecting and evaluating." This problem-centered approach to tasks helps students understand why they are learning the information they are exposed to and how they will use it in everyday life. The organization of the class, which is highly collaborative, reinforces these goals while at the same time helping to build soft skills such as listening, group problem solving, and verbal communication.²⁴

¹⁹ "A Teaming Approach: Washington State's Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST)." National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. http://www.highereducation.org/reports/Policy_Practice/IBEST.pdf

²⁰ "Learn About I-BEST Implementation." Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. http://www.sbctc.edu/college/_e-ibestcreateyourownprogram.aspx

²¹ Wachen, J., et. al. "How I-BEST Works: Findings from a Field Study of Washington State's Integrate Basic Education and Skills Training Program." Community College Research Center, September 2010. pp. 8-10. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/how-i-best-works-findings.pdf>

²² "Who We Are." GED As Project, Virginia Commonwealth University. http://www.valrc.org/resources/gedasproject/who_we_are.htm

²³ "Getting Started." GED As Project, Virginia Commonwealth University. http://www.valrc.org/resources/gedasproject/getting_started.htm

²⁴ Ibid.

CAREER TRAINING PROGRAM PROFILES

CAREER PATHWAYS

Career pathway programs are workforce development systems that guide students through a clear sequence of courses leading to employer-recognized credentials. Career pathways accelerate students' time to completion by eliminating duplication of content and by avoiding requirements that will be unnecessary for their selected career path. As important, these programs provide students with a very clear understanding of the occupations that they will be qualified for upon completion of the program. Career pathways often cater to adults with a low-level of preexisting skills, but that is not always the case. In fact, career pathway programs are generally constructed with multiple "entry points," which allow many programs to serve students with a range of educational backgrounds.

An essential element of successful career pathways programs is "chunking," i.e. breaking the degree up into a set of smaller credentials that can be earned in sequence.

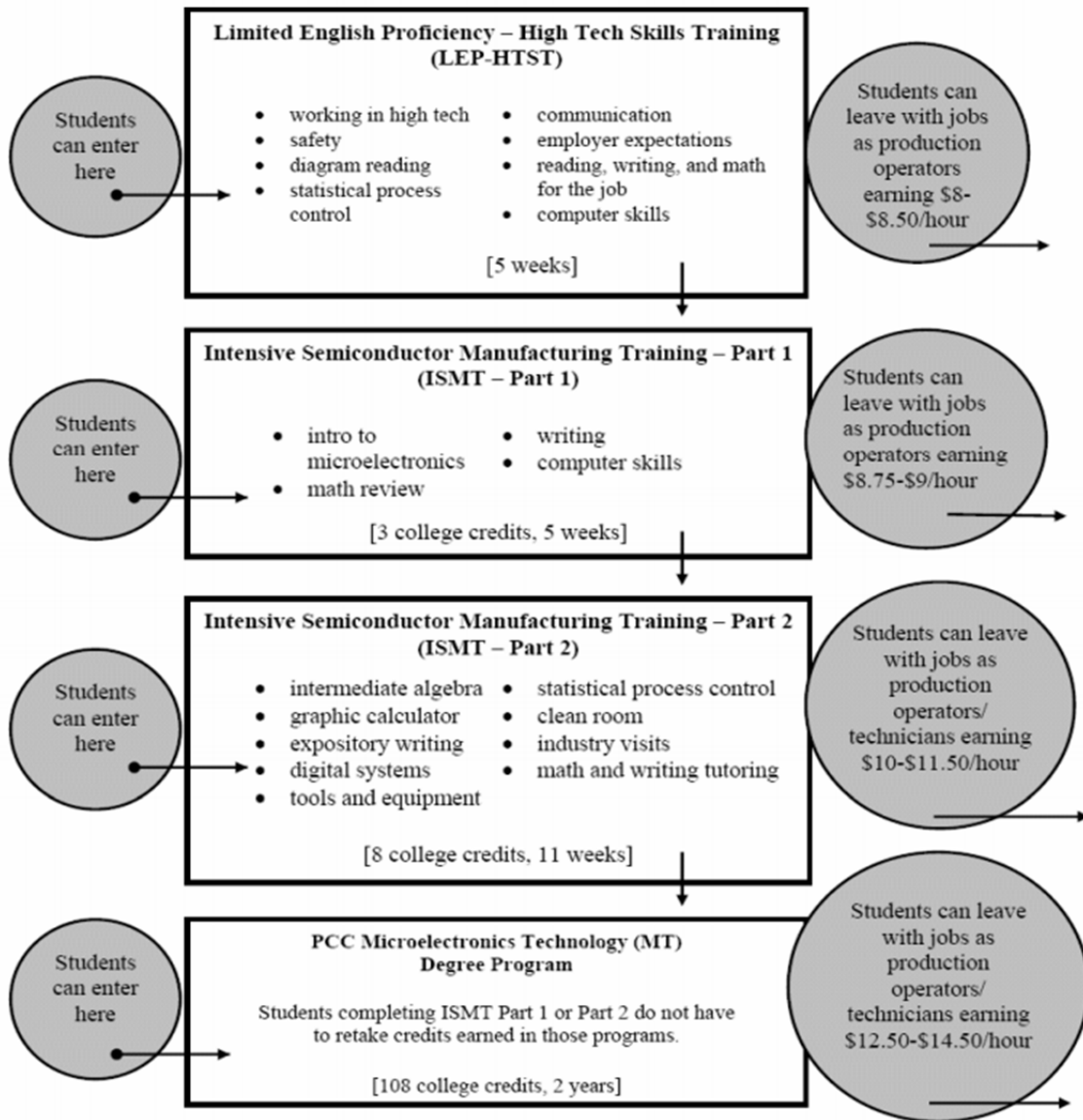
An essential element of successful career pathways programs is "chunking," or breaking the degree up into a set of smaller credentials that can be earned in sequence. This system not only enables students to visualize a set of attainable goals, it also has the benefit of providing students with a credential even if they do not complete the entire program. A diagram of a chunked career pathway at Portland Community College is shown on the following page in Figure 1.1.

The Career Pathways program at Portland Community College (PCC) was recognized in 2006 as one of the strongest such programs in the nation. Offering short (three- to 12-month) credentials in more than 20 fields, PCC's program offers students complete wrap-around service to maximize their chances of securing a rewarding career. Before a student enters the program, he or she works with advisors to better understand his or her selected career path. During the program students enroll in a course on career planning, which provides them with resume writing, interviewing, and other career advancement skills to add to their specific occupational training. Finally, at the end of the program, students work with employment specialists to develop a job search plan and to prepare for interviews.²⁵

²⁵ "Why Career Pathways?" Portland Community College. <http://www.pcc.edu/career/pathways/why-pathways.html#vocational>

Figure 1.1: Career Pathway in Microelectronics, Portland Community College

Students enter different trainings based on their skill level. Once students complete a training component they can move to the next training, or they can obtain employment and pursue the next level of training later, or they can combine work and training.



Source: Image from Building Blocks for Building Skills²⁶

²⁶ "Building Blocks for Building Skills," Op. cit., p. 25.

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Pre-apprenticeship programs can assist adult students in “transitioning” adult students into apprenticeships by “integrating apprenticeship concepts” into core adult education curriculum areas.²⁷

One particularly successful pre-apprenticeship program is the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program implemented by the Newark/Essex Construction Careers Consortium (N/ECCC) in New Jersey. The target population for this program is Essex County’s most economically disadvantaged residents, generally individuals of color between the ages of 16 and 44 who have histories of unemployment and incarceration. Although the program requires participants to have a high school diploma or its equivalent, most of those who enroll “have low levels of academic preparation... [and] would have difficulty scoring high enough on the union apprenticeship tests.”²⁸ The program seeks to prepare these students for an apprenticeship with one of 17 local building and construction trades unions. It is hosted three times each year, with an average enrollment of between 30 and 40 students.²⁹

The program lasts for 10 weeks, with classes generally held on weekday evenings. The program’s curriculum consists of three pieces, each of which is geared toward enabling the students to pass the union apprenticeship tests and to succeed in their apprenticeship if it is offered. The program’s academic component focuses on applied math, reading for information, and locating information within a text. The second aspect of the pre-apprenticeship curriculum is a hands-on course in the basics of construction, such as measuring and handling different materials. Finally, the program also provides training in life and career skills, such as interviewing for jobs and financial management.³⁰

²⁷“Information about Apprenticeship for AB 86 Adult Education Regional Consortia.” California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. <http://ab86.cccco.edu/HelpfulResources/ApprenticeshipInformation.aspx>

²⁸ “An Evaluation of the Newark/Essex Construction Careers Consortium Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program.” John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, June 2007. pp. 13-17.
http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/NECCC_Report_Final_071907.pdf

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-21.

SECTION II: ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR IMMIGRANTS

KEY FINDINGS

- **Immigrants to the United States represent one of the fastest growing markets for adult education.** It is estimated that by 2030, one in five U.S. workers will have been born in a different country. Moreover, these newcomers are less likely than American-born adults to have a high school diploma. Thus, educating immigrants will be a key service for adult education providers in the future.
- **Acclimating to life in the United States involves linguistic, economic, and civic components.** It is currently common for education providers to attempt to meet each of these needs independently, but that does not appear to be an effective strategy. Instead, experts in the field advise educators to provide overlapping services that reinforce one another. For example, a version of contextualized education that offers English language instruction while delivering vocational training would speed students' progress through both programs.
- **The immigrant population in the United States is very diverse, making a one-size-fits-all approach to education impractical.** Many good education programs for adult immigrants emphasize secondary-level instruction, combining English language practice with vocational training and basic-plus reading and numeracy skills. However, such a program would not fit the needs of a portion of the immigrant population that already has postsecondary credentials. Furthermore, a number of newly arrived adults are not literate in their native language, making the instruction offered by many ESL providers inappropriate for them as well. Educators should understand the immigrant population in the region they serve to determine which programs are most appropriate and in demand.

OVERVIEW OF TRENDS IN IMMIGRANT EDUCATION

Since 1970, the percentage of the U.S. labor force that is composed of foreign born workers has grown considerably. By 2008, approximately one in six workers in the United States was an immigrant, and it is estimated that by 2030 that proportion will rise to one in five.^{31, 32} While many in this population are well educated, adult immigrants are almost three times more likely than their U.S.-born counterparts to have not completed secondary school. Even among college-educated immigrants, as many as one in four have limited proficiency in English.³³ Thus, immigrants are an expanding market for adult education programs, and

³¹ World Education. "Adult Education and Immigrant Integration: Networks for Integrating New Americans Theoretical Framework." September 20, 2013. p. 6. https://iincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/NINA_theoretical-framework.pdf

³² "Fast Facts - The U.S. Immigrant Population: Demographics, Education, Labor Force, and the Economy." Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education. <http://www.cccie.org/immigration-and-education-resources/higher-education-facts>

³³ Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, Op. cit.

such programs play an essential role in helping immigrants integrate into their new communities.

It is often presumed that the key gap to immigrant integration into the United States is English language proficiency, and indeed that is true. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of individuals living in the United States who are classified as “Limited English Proficient (LEP)” grew by almost five million.³⁴ Today, 23 million adults in the United States, including 2.9 million native-born Americans, have a limited ability to communicate in English.³⁵ Individuals with low English proficiency can struggle in myriad ways, so a strong English education can be, in the words of researchers Sean Kennedy and John Walters, “the difference between holding down three low wage jobs or pursuing a career track position, enrolling in higher education, or simply communicating with physicians and teachers about their child’s well-being.”³⁶

However, English language instruction is not a newcomer’s only educational need. Finding a job that pays a living wage and developing an understanding of the civic culture in which they now live is also important. In establishing guidelines for integrating adult immigrants into the United States, education and civil rights groups such as World Education and the National Partnership for New Americans call civic integration, economic mobility, and English language acquisition “the three pillars of integration.”³⁷ These organizations suggest that the three goals of any successful immigrant education programs should be to:³⁸

- Improve immigrants’ access to effective and innovative English language programs;
- Support immigrants on the path to citizenship; and
- Support immigrants’ career development through training and education.

Traditionally, educational institutions have tried to meet each of these goals independent of one another, often resulting in a lack of success for each. For example, the most robust available evidence indicates that most adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs run by community colleges or K-12 school districts have struggled, marked by “high drop-out rates, low proficiency gains, and rigid barriers to participation and rapid language acquisition.”³⁹ Most telling, statistics tracked by the Department of Education’s English Literacy program indicate that of the more than 1.2 million individuals who enrolled in adult ESL programs between 2007 and 2010, only about 40 percent showed any sign of improving their English language skills.

³⁴ Pandya, C. “Limited English Proficient Workers and the Workforce Investment Act: Challenges and Opportunities.” Migration Policy Institute, July 19, 2012. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-workers-and-workforce-investment-act-challenges-and-opportunities/>

³⁵ Kennedy, S., and J. Walters. “Repairing the Nation’s Education System for Adult English Learners.” Lexington Institute, July 2013. p.3. <http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/AdultELLpaperJuly13.pdf>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ World Education, Op. cit., p. 15.

³⁸ Bulleted list quoted verbatim from: Ibid., p. 8.

³⁹ Kennedy and Walters, Op. cit.

New scholarship suggests that a better approach involves “the weaving of linguistic, economic, and civic integration strategies and activities.”⁴⁰ Because English language proficiency plays an essential role in immigrants’ ability to work and participate in wider civic life, combining civic and job training with English language instruction is a sensible alternative that provides two distinct benefits. First, the language instruction is more likely to be remembered because the lessons are directly relevant. Second, combining lessons eliminates the need for students to attend multiple classes during the week, removing a significant barrier—time—to student participation.

In addition, the guidelines established by World Education and the National Partnership for New Americans suggest these additional best practices for adult immigrant education providers:⁴¹

- Revise intake procedures to identify and respond to the needs of low- and high-skilled ELLs (English Language Learners) and to identify immigrants who are eligible for citizenship and counseling to assist such immigrants to pursue nationalization;
- Implement instructional strategies that accelerate learning in and outside of class and use emerging technology tools and mentors from the community;
- Integrate college and career readiness content and skill development with ESOL instruction for low- and high-skilled ELLs;
- Align highest levels of ESOL with postsecondary education and training, and/or integrate the two;
- Provide experience in democratic practices and civic participation in and outside of class;
- Capitalize on resources in the community to extend instruction and services;
- Secure internships, job shadowing opportunities with local employers, and mentors for students;
- Build understanding among immigrant and U.S.-born adult students and community members in and outside of class; and
- Participate in community activities.

PROFILES OF PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS FOR ADULT IMMIGRANTS

Many of the most successful adult ESL programs in the United States are administered by community organizations. That is because, according to Kennedy and Walters, they “are proving more effective at matching their programs to the needs of their student populations.” These needs include practical considerations such as scheduling flexibility and childcare, as well as meeting students’ individual learning and curriculum expectations.⁴²

⁴⁰ World Education, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴¹ Bullet points quoted verbatim from: World Education, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁴² Kennedy and Walters, *Op. cit.*, pp. 6, 9.

CARLOS ROSARIO INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Washington D.C.'s Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School is the nation's first charter school devoted to adult learning, and it is also "a nationally recognized leader in the field of work-focused English and skills training."⁴³ The school, which has been in operation since 1970, offers multiple language courses that build instruction around "life and technology skills, health education, parenting, civics, and workforce training."⁴⁴ Last year, the Rosario School was given the Migration Policy Institute's *E Pluribus Unum* award for "exceptional immigrant integration activities."⁴⁵

Rosario combines language instruction and vocational training in a way that these areas not only reinforce but incentivize one another. The institution's ESL curriculum is divided into eight different levels, which students enter and advance through based on individually designed plans and strict assessments. As students advance through the program they become eligible for different workplace skills training. At level four, for example, they can take computer literacy classes. At level seven students are able to begin a culinary training program, and after completion of the ESL curriculum they are eligible to pursue nurse aide certification. Rosario also partners with local higher education and business institutions to ensure that the skills it teaches will remain in demand well after students have graduated.⁴⁶

PUENTE LEARNING CENTER

The most popular educational program at PUENTE Learning Center's two locations in Los Angeles is English as a Second Language, which accounts for almost 70 percent of the community school's enrollments.⁴⁷ However, while the classes are big—sometimes as many as 50 students are enrolled in a single session—PUENTE consistently focuses on providing individualized instruction. According to Luis Marquez, CEO of PUENTE, "We meet the learner where he or she is by assessing their skills, then design a program based on their strengths, and support their ability to go as far and as fast as they choose."⁴⁸

The institution's high level of individualization is made possible by its use of blended learning. In addition to learning in a traditional classroom, students also spend a considerable amount of time working with CALIS, PUENTE's language acquisition software. CALIS allows instructors to assign more than 1,500 specific, customized lessons to individual students, and it enables students to work through the lessons' vocabulary, reading, and grammar until they have comfortably mastered them. This system has proven successful—85 percent of the students in 2005 increased their English proficiency—and offers the added benefit of providing computer literacy skills that benefit students on the job market.^{49,50}

⁴³ Migration Policy Institute. "Exceptional Immigrant Integration Initiatives in Adult Education, Community Revitalization, Cross-Program Coordination and Health-Care Access Honored with Prestigious National Award." December 4, 2013. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/national-press-release-EPUP-2013>

⁴⁴ "About Us." Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School. <http://www.carlosrosario.org/about/>

⁴⁵ Migration Policy Institute, Op. cit.

⁴⁶ Kennedy and Walters, Op. Cit., pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷ "English as a Second Language." PUENTE Learning Center. <https://www.puente.org/programs/adults/esl>

⁴⁸ Kennedy and Walters, Op. cit., p. 9.

⁴⁹ Kennedy and Walters, Op. cit., p. 10.

CASA DE MARYLAND

Casa de Maryland (Casa) is a nonprofit agency in Maryland that caters to a primarily Central American community. The organization provides numerous immigrant services, including legal aid, medical health programs, and employment screening. Casa also offers a range of educational programming, including vocational training as well as courses on finances, Spanish literacy, computer literacy, and ESL.⁵¹

Casa has developed a unique solution to the problem of students' work and family schedules interfering with their language studies. Through its Drop-In Day Laborer Program, Casa offers a series of self-contained lessons to day laborers who are unable to find work on any given day. The lessons are practical, focusing on topics such as work, banking, and interactions with law enforcement. However, the program's greatest strength is its flexibility. It allows students to learn English at their own pace and on a schedule dictated by their own lives. That being said, although this program has proven popular at Casa, it may be impractical to implement at the community college level.⁵²

WELCOME BACK

While many programs are designed for low-skilled immigrants, it is also important to consider that many newcomers to the United States are well educated, with one in three possessing a college degree. However, because these individuals often lack English language proficiency or U.S. credentials they encounter obstacles when trying to pursue employment in the occupations for which they have been trained. Approximately one out of every five highly skilled immigrants in the United States finds himself or herself employed in low-wage, unskilled occupations.⁵³ This underutilization of an individual's skills, commonly referred to as "brain waste," is not only damaging to the newcomer himself or herself but also to the community as a whole, which is denied the potentially needed service of educated individuals.

One example of a program that has attempted to help connect skilled or semi-skilled immigrants into American careers is the Welcome Back Initiative. Welcome Back was created by San Francisco State University and City College of San Francisco in 2001 to "build a bridge between the pool of internationally trained health workers living in the United States and the need for linguistically and culturally competent health services in underserved communities."⁵⁴ Since that time, the Welcome Back Initiative has grown to be offered nationwide in 10 different locations.⁵⁵ Although Welcome Back was specifically designed to work with those in the field of health care, the program could likely be adapted to provide the requisite language skills and credentialization for other occupations as well.

⁵⁰ PUENTE Learning Center, Op. cit.

⁵¹ Root Page: Casa de Maryland. <http://www.casademaryland.org/home>

⁵² Kennedy and Walters, Op. cit., p. 9.

⁵³ Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, Op. cit.

⁵⁴ "ESL Program Models and Best Practices." Global Talent Bridge, 2011. p. 3.
http://www.globaltalentbridge.org/toolkit/pdf/CH4_ESLModels.pdf

⁵⁵ "Center Locations." Welcome Back Initiative. <http://www.welcomebackinitiative.org/wb/>

The Welcome Back Initiative offers numerous services for immigrants, including help navigating the credentialing landscape in the United States. However, one of its most valuable resources is its ESL curriculum called English Health Train. English Health Train is contextualized language training that is delivered in five different modules of eight units each designed to assist students in finding healthcare jobs and communicating in that setting. The curriculum is taken over a total of 320 hours and consists of the following modules:⁵⁶

- Exploring Career Goals in Health Care
- Communicating with Patients and Families
- Communicating with Other Health Professionals
- Exploring Critical Issues in Health Care
- Intercultural Communication in Health Care

⁵⁶ "ESL Program Models and Best Practices," Op. cit., p. 4.

SECTION III: PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

KEY FINDINGS

- **Programs for adults with disabilities generally focus on serving students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.** Although it is not unheard of for institutions to offer specialized programs for the physically disabled, it is relatively rare. Instead, the physically disabled are generally expected to participate in traditional college programs, with accommodations to meet their needs provided by offices of disability support.
- **Programs for adults with disabilities tend to be primarily designed for young adults who have recently completed secondary school.** These programs emphasize the transition to adulthood and independent living. However, since many states allow disabled youth to remain in public school until they turn 21, these students may still be slightly older than the traditional college population.

OVERVIEW

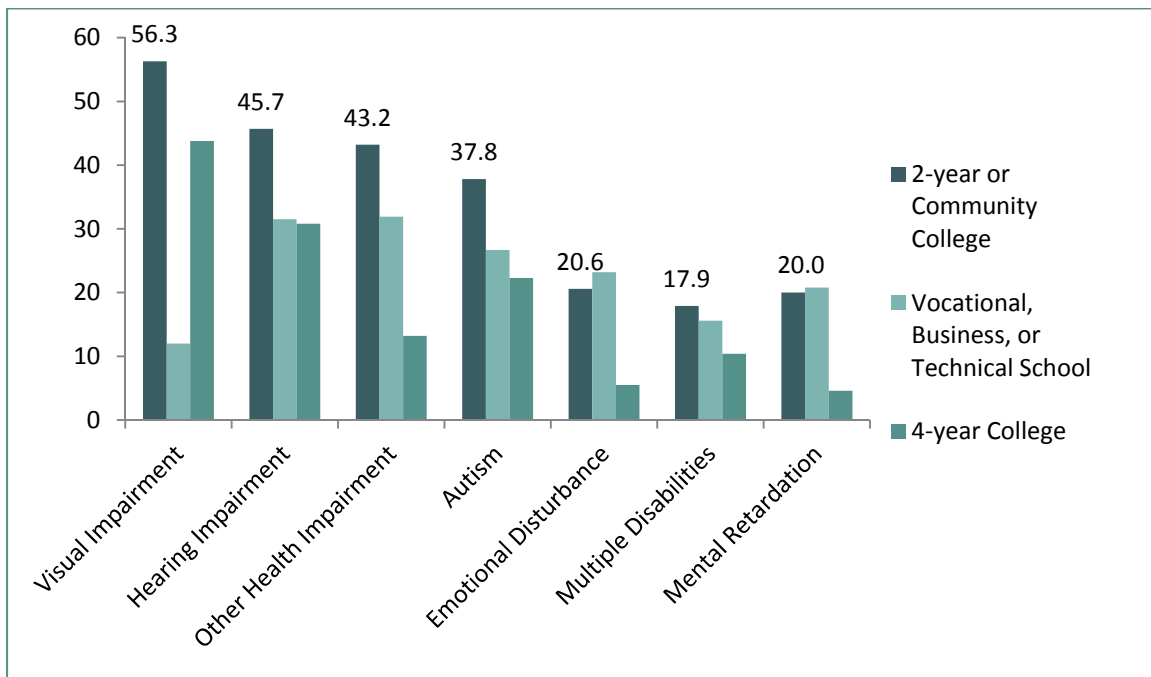
People with disabilities are less likely than the general public to attend higher educational institutions. However, the number of disabled adults who are doing so has grown in recent years, with most preferring community college or vocational training programs to four-year colleges and universities. For example, a 2009 study of young adults with disabilities conducted by the National Center for Special Education Research found that approximately 45 percent “continued on to postsecondary education within 4 years of leaving high school.”⁵⁷

At the same time, as is shown on the following page in Figure 3.1, disabled adults’ participation in postsecondary education varies greatly depending on the nature of their disability. About 80 percent of the young adults with visual impairments covered in the study described above reported postsecondary attendance. A similar proportion (72 percent) of those with hearing impairment did as well. On the other hand, only 27 percent of those with developmental or intellectual disabilities—referred to in the study as “mental retardation”—enrolled in an educational program after high school.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Newman, L., et. al. “The Post-High School Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities up to 4 Years After High School: A Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2.” National Center for Education Research, April 2009. p. 14. http://www.nlts2.org/reports/2009_04/nlts2_report_2009_04_complete.pdf

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of Young Adults with Disabilities Who Have Enrolled in Postsecondary Education



Source: National Center for Special Education Research⁵⁹

Programs for adults with disabilities can also vary considerably depending on the particular disability. Current best practice is to integrate most students with physical, emotional, and learning disabilities into traditional programs while using disability support services to help accommodate the students' particular needs. This trend has emerged from K-12 education, where special education pull-out programs have come to be seen as ineffective and where the percentage of special needs children who receive instruction in a regular classroom grew from less than 33 percent to more than 50 percent between 1990 and 2009.⁶⁰

Many also argue for the integration of students with developmental or intellectual disabilities into regular college programs when possible. For example, supporters of a Massachusetts program that offers college classes to the mentally disabled say that "inclusion helps students discern their own interests, needs, and strengths, become advocates for their own choices and decisions around academic, social, and work activities, acquire career and life skills, and participate in college life like their peers and siblings."⁶¹ Further, many states encourage the parents of mentally challenged youth to consider integrated programs when developing plans to transition their adult children out of the K-12 education system. "Transition planning is all about real work experience," according to the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁰ Stevenson, K. "Educational Trends Shaping School Planning, Design, Construction, Funding and Operation." National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, September 2010. p. 4. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539457.pdf>

⁶¹ Lefferts, J. "Intellectually Disabled Students Find Few Options." *Boston Globe*, November 24, 2013. <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/west/2013/11/24/striving-open-college-students-with-intellectual-disabilities/t7pwAM2lh7j8rGX5fcuvbl/story.html>

Arc of Illinois. “So say ‘no’ to ‘vocational readiness’ and ‘pre-employment training’ that is offered only in a sheltered environment (or simulated sheltered workshop within a school setting).”⁶²

At the same time, many individuals with intellectual disabilities are not able to participate in traditional college course work. Partially as a result of this, the intellectually disabled work and take part in education less than any other disabled group.⁶³ Those who do seek postsecondary education are most likely to do so through open enrollment institutions or specialized programs geared toward their needs. Generally, they will not be enrolled seeking a degree.⁶⁴

Therefore, most educational programs for adults with disabilities focus on the developmentally and intellectually challenged segment of the disabled population. Think College, a national organization committed to improving higher education for the intellectually disabled, currently lists 213 programs for people with an intellectual disability in the United States and Canada. These programs vary in content but often focus on providing one or more of the following:

- Academic enrichment, including credit and non-credit college courses and course auditing;
- Socialization;
- Life skills, including travel, cooking, and self-advocacy; and
- Vocational training, including work experience and skill development that lead to gainful employment.

PROFILES OF PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

PROJECT SAINT (SANTA FE COLLEGE)

Project SAINT (Student Access and Inclusion Together) at Santa Fe College in Florida is a two-year program for adults with intellectual disabilities. Santa Fe College has an established Adults with Disabilities Program that offers transition education to help young adults move into independent life. Its courses run for six hours each week and focus on instruction in life skills and academic basics such as reading and math.⁶⁵

⁶² “The Arc of Illinois Family Manual for Transition to Work and Adult Services.” The Arc of Illinois. p. 11.
http://www.isbe.state.il.us/iicc/pdf/arc_family_manual.pdf

⁶³ Migliore, A., J. Butterworth, and D. Hart. “Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities.” Think College, 2009.
http://www.thinkcollege.net/images/stories/site_images/pubs/FF_1.pdf

⁶⁴ Thompson, T., et. al. “AHEAD White Paper on Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Campus Disability Services.” Association on Higher Education and Disability, July 2011. http://www.mtsd.k12.wi.us/cms_files/resources/PC-Jan13-AHEADWhitePaper.pdf

⁶⁵ “Adults with Disabilities Program.” Santa Fe College.
http://dept.sfcollege.edu/academicfoundations/adulteducation/adultswithdisabilities/content/AWD_trifold.pdf

Project SAINT was built out of this initiative, but it offers a more intensive educational experience. Students who are accepted into Project SAINT each create individual plans designed to guide their experience at Santa Fe via “academics, social and recreational opportunities, and vocational preparation and placements.” Students enroll in community education and vocational courses, and they also have the option to audit other Santa Fe College courses. In addition, the 20-hour per week program includes multiple chances for disabled students to be included in traditional campus life, such as participating in student organizations and campus activities.⁶⁶

TAPESTRY (UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE)

Another program designed to aid intellectually challenged young adults in their transition to the workforce is Transition and Postsecondary Education and Employment Students, Technology, Relationships, and You (TAPESTRY) at the University of Alaska Anchorage. According to its webpage, the program is meant to “provide students with intellectual and cognitive disabilities a postsecondary college experience to develop self-advocacy skills, engage in career exploration, and develop social skills that lead to employment in a career field or enrollment in a postsecondary educational program.”⁶⁷ Although the program targets students who are the age of traditional college students (18 to 21), it is not meant for students who would otherwise be attending college because TAPESTRY students cannot have received a high school diploma.⁶⁸

TAPESTRY focuses on teaching students a variety of social, academic, career, and life skills. Each student creates a personalized instructional program, which includes enrollment in courses that will result in a UAA workforce credential. In addition, students are required to participate in extracurricular activities at the university to develop social skills.⁶⁹ Students also audit traditional UAA courses in their area of interest and participate in five job shadowing experiences. Finally, the TAPESTRY program itself includes eight courses, shown the following page in Figure 3.2, that emphasize practical life and employment skills.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ “Project SAINT.” Santa Fe College.
<http://dept.sfcollege.edu/academicfoundations/adulteducation/adultswithdisabilities/content/media/ProjectSAINTbrochure.pdf>

⁶⁷ “TAPESTRY.” University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.
<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/centerforhumandevlopment/tapestry/index.cfm>

⁶⁸ “TAPESTRY Frequently Asked Questions.” University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.
<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/centerforhumandevlopment/tapestry/upload/FAQ-Fall-2012-Booklet.pdf>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “TAPESTRY Program Description.” University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development.
<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/centerforhumandevlopment/tapestry/courses.cfm>

Figure 3.2: TAPESTRY Curriculum (University of Alaska Anchorage)

COURSE	DESCRIPTION
Orientation Seminar	Students gain information about campus resources including: transportation, activities, clubs, facilities, and skills needed to navigate UAA systems and services.
Exploration Seminar	Assist students to identify personal interests, educational goals, and work goals using person centered planning and other self-determination strategies. Topics include goal setting (short and long term), self identification of skill/personality characteristics, career exploration, calendaring, Social Security benefits identification, and work incentives planning.
Core Social Skills Seminar	Students learn how to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Topics include: recognizing and identifying feelings, differentiating between various types of relationships, setting personal boundaries, communication, meeting people and first impressions, planning social activities, the dating process, personal safety, sexual health and gender differences.
Job Search Seminar	Building on TAPESTRY Exploration Seminar, students will gain skills to choose a career field that uses their individual strengths. Topics include: labor market research, educational research resume completion, interview skill development, disability disclosure, reasonable accommodations, and advanced work incentives planning.
Internship I	Building on TAPESTRY Job Search Seminar students will gain experience, paid or unpaid, in situations that align with their career choices. Students will secure an internship and hone the following skills: workplace communication, solicit supervisory guidance, requesting reasonable accommodations, adhering to workplace policy, using personal support networks, and self monitoring.
Internship II	Building on TAPESTRY Internship I, students will secure an internship, paid employment, or self-employment and hone the following skills: identifying go/no go employment characteristics, explaining long term employment goals and strategies to achieve them, mentor students in other TAPESTRY courses and various self-advocacy skills.
Life and Social Skills Seminar	Students will begin to identify and engage in opportunities for social interaction with other UAA Students, Staff, and Faculty while on campus. Students will identify how to become involved in UAA clubs and organizations, social activities, student government, student media, student showcase, concert board, Bartlett Lecture Series, and Greek Life and other on-campus activities. These social activities will allow students to practice real life skills concepts in transportation, finance, and personal responsibility.
Creating Success in College	Designed to assist incoming student make a successful transition from high school, home or the workplace to college. Adopts a seminar approach requiring students to use a textbook, listen to lectures, participate in discussions, activities, and complete a variety of written and oral assignments. Adjustment and transition issues—academic, career, intrapersonal and interpersonal—are addressed with a structured, content-based curriculum, flexible enough to promote the exploration and resolution of individual concerns.

Source: University of Alaska Anchorage⁷¹

PROJECT ACCESS (HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

Project Access at Howard Community College in Maryland is designed to “improve the delivery and outcomes of postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities.”⁷² Its major goals include improving students’ academic preparedness, making them aware of available college resources, familiarizing them with their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and assessing their skill level to ensure appropriate course placement.

⁷¹ Table contents taken verbatim from: “TAPESTRY Program Description,” Op. cit.

⁷² “Project Access High School Transition Program for Students with Disabilities.” Howard Community College. http://www.howardcc.edu/students/academic_support_services/project_access

Unlike the other programs for adults with disabilities profiled in this report, Project Access was created for students with physical as well as intellectual disabilities.

At its heart, Project Access is an outreach program designed to increase enrollment among traditional-aged students with disabilities by better attracting and retaining them. A crucial element of the program is a month-long experience that brings students to campus to experience the structure of college life. In addition to testing and events, “students are exposed to adaptive technologies available at the college and taught courses on self-advocacy and other self-sufficiency skills.”⁷³ Finally, the program also gives students access to job-placement services designed to help them secure employment and “negotiate workplace accommodations with employers.”⁷⁴

⁷³ “Career-Focused Services for Students with Disabilities at Community Colleges.” National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth and the Workforce Strategy Center. March 2009. p. 23. <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/background/disabilities-and-community-colleges.pdf>

⁷⁴ “Project Access High School Transition Program for Students with Disabilities,” Op. cit.

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