

Senate Education Committee
October 14, 2008
Adult Basic Education Funding & Future

I am Suzii Paynter, Director, Christian Life Commission, Baptist General Convention of Texas. I am here today on the subject of Adult Basic Education because our Executive Board and state convention of our 6000 churches have designated adult education as a priority for the future of Texas, her families, children and workforce. In our 2006 report ***Abriendo Puertas! (Opening Doors!)*** the Hispanic Education Advisory Council of the Baptist Convention set drop-out prevention and drop-out recovery and educating adults as a statewide emphasis. In a previous life, I was a reading specialist and I have recently served on the board of the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas.

ROI

There are many ways of calculating return on investment for an educated Texas. There have been no shortage of discussion of those factors today. One particular fact that compelled our study was the positive impact of a parent's experience in learning on the performance and future of children. In a study conducted with ABE graduates, to determine the impact of their participation in ABE on their children's education, it was found that:

- **81%** talked to their children more about school
- **75%** assisted more often with their children's homework.
- **75%** saw an improvement in their children's grades
- **73%** proclaimed their children began showing a better attitude toward school

Source: U.S. Adult Literacy Programs: Making a Difference,
Proliteracy of America: 2003

Literacy Day at the Capitol

For the past two years we have helped to host **Literacy Day at the Capitol**. We expected 30 – 40 adult basic education students to come to Austin to tell their stories of eager learning, second jobs, family sacrifice and increased work skills. But we were surprised. More than three hundred working adults showed up to meet their legislators – 335 adults working on their English, their GED, their workplace skills. These are remarkably sacrificial Texans – they are doing double duty to provide for their families and seek a better future. They are turning the past around and building a future. But they need a system that works with them and with the dedicated teachers, counselors and mentors that guide these second chance Texans.

We do not think the ABE system is broken; we think it is anemic. Given the meager resources and educational isolation, the current ABE system does remarkable work. The Christian Life Commission supports efforts to provide robust and meaningful adult education. Currently, however,

- There is not a place where ABE adult learners are a priority into the greater post secondary education mission of Texas.
- The lack of clearly identified adult education centers make entry and retention difficult for even the most motivated students.
- The federal GED policy creates a dis-incentive for cooperation between adult ed and local K-12 districts.
- Although some promising projects exist, seamless transition to Postsecondary programs on a scale relevant to Texas future employment needs are unavailable and unfunded.

Considering the available data, the conclusion is inescapable. **If we want to do more than educate our adults to become members of the working poor**, we must rethink the mission and delivery of adult education.

Completion of adult literacy, ESL or GED must become the half-way point in a trajectory that leads to transition to and success in post secondary education or skilled and technical job training. This will require new partnerships between adult literacy programs and post secondary institutions at both the state policy level and the local operational level.

Policy Role:

As legislators you cannot singlehandedly fix the education of all Texans. You cannot motivate, you cannot complete, you cannot even allocate our state into an educated future. But you can create policies that make education and prosperity the expectation in Texas, you can create incentives and the seamless structures that provide access to educational advancement and you can provide reasonable funding of a system that makes progress and prosperity the norm, rather than the exception for those without a high school diploma.

There is a message from Texas to those without a high school diploma. Put yourself in the shoes of one of those 335 students who came to the capitol. If you believe that you are a failure in high school, you believe that there is no place for you on a college campus. If you think college is closed to you and you want to get more education where do you go? In your town - where would you go? Do you want to go back to the high school where you know you failed? Not likely.

Stick with this demographic exercise just a minute more. The state of Texas will put several things at your finger tips. You may lack a high school diploma, but you can see advertisements galore for pay day loans and pawn shops. You can buy a lottery ticket at every convenience store counter (lottery advertising budget alone is 4 times the expenditure of adult education) ...as a state we are sending real messages about debt and chance.....but where do you go to get back into school? How do you know **what** to do? Simple REAL access to adult education is a critical piece of any new system and access is the type of policy priority that, as Senators, you can insure.

What to do:

1. **At the very least fund ABE as is - if more \$\$:**
 - a. hire full-time, highly qualified staff for all facilities
 - b. facilities remain open longer and through the summer and visible .
 - c. construct more sites to accommodate students with no means of transportation
 - d. provide a more cohesive and consistent continuum of services including transition to postsecondary programs.
2. **DOES MONEY MATTER?**
 - a. California's ASE "High" enrollment was more than ten times greater than Texas ASE High enrollment was 20,467 versus 1,831 for Texas, 2006-2007. **California spends in one year = 80 yrs TX.**
 - b. California had enrollment volume of more than 5,000 completers. Compared with Texas, less than 1,000.
 - c. Florida's ASE "High" enrollments have been well over 50,000 with nearly 60% completers. In 2006-2007, **Florida spends in one year = 45 yrs of TX.**
 - d. Florida's performance peaked with 62,148 enrolled and 69% completers.

We are here today because between TEA and THECB there is a desire to usher in a new adult education system. Allocations should flow to both agencies for ABE:

3. **Create a council of representatives (TEA, THECB, Literacy Councils, CBO, Fiscal Agents, GREAT Centers, Providers) to initiate and oversee policy so things get done.**
4. **Create universal access by addressing location. Serve more people.**
 - a. Texas needs **Centers** that are devoted to meeting the needs of adult learners. One model site has been the Kyle Learning Center in Kyle. It is located at the Saddle Creek apartments. The apartments are for low and moderate income families. The housing was built utilizing the Affordable Housing Tax Credits that are offered through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). Tax credit housing developers are required to reserve some space for a "social service" type service and Community Action Inc, (ABE fiscal agent) worked with the builder to provide a learning center in the apartment complex. The Kyle Learning Center serves about 150 students. The building consists of three large classrooms equipped with desks, books, blackboards and computers. There are also two offices that belong to Community Action Inc. located in the main complex building. The facility is five years old and the lease is up for renewal or termination in five more.

There are **13 regions for allocating Tax Credit Housing and more than \$42 million was allocated for tax in July 2008**. Perhaps more developers in this cadre or future groups would follow the model of Kyle, Community Action Inc. , and bring an Adult Learning Center to an apartment community.

- b. Where Community College Campuses are available and used for ABE, provide clear and central marking for adult learning, adult education.
- c. If more funding is allocated, there can be the investment in platforms for more technology and distance learning so that more people are served.

5. Transitioning to Post Secondary through Close collaboration of TEA (Texas LEARNS) with Community Colleges and other post secondary education sites.

It is important to note that the vast majority of persons who come to adult education programs in Texas in order to achieve their GED perform at the intermediate levels of ABE as measured by the TABE at baseline assessment. Many of these intermediate students are able to achieve their GED in a relatively short period of time (less than one year).

What is missing is an affordable (to the student) system for transitioning GED students to college readiness to prevent the squandering of Pell Grants etc. on non credit developmental courses—

6. GED PLUS: DEVLOPMENTAL Postsecondary

- a. **Bridge Programs** Bridge programs are post-GED programs that prepare students for post secondary work. They generally offer additional work in reading, writing and math as well as college counseling. In programs sponsored by public schools or CBOs, programs establish relationships with local community colleges to facilitate admission and help adult learners to experience the community college context. The National College Transitions Network supports 25 transitions programs. Most use the bridge model. You can find descriptions of the 25 programs here. <http://www.collegetransition.org/profiles/profilesma.html>
 - i. The New Haven Adult and Continuing Education Center expanded its services to include a comprehensive college transition program in partnership with Gateway Community College (GAP). The GAP allows students in the High School Credit Diploma Program and advanced GED and advanced ESOL classes to take Gateway Community College developmental English, Math, and Human Development classes while continuing to finish high school or English proficiency classes. All classes are held at the Center. Counselors and caseworkers provide comprehensive support services to students enrolled in GAP classes. These services include goal setting, academic advising, Accuplacer testing, course

registration, admissions counseling, financial aid advising, and developmental counseling. These critical services have proven to be very effective in maintaining student retention.

- b. **Merged Programs.** USDE/OVAE has funded a research project designed to identify the most successful adult literacy transitions practices. Based on that research, one of the most successful transitions endeavors seems to be the merged program. In fact, a **Minnesota community college claimed an 80% transition rate. In the merged program, adult literacy students participate along with community college developmental skills students and little or no distinction is made between them...same room, same teacher, same instruction, same support services.**

<http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/sectech/factsheet/cctrans/2005.html>
http://www.berkeleypolicyassociates.com/text/work_project778.html

- c. **GED Plus : Job Cluster CAPITAL IDEA** - Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models(Appendix Q which includes pages 15-30 from the report) from the **National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy**, a pilot program in Texas received recognition for its high completion rate. Information on Capital IDEA and its partnerships is available at www.capitalidea.org. Follow-up revealed that the Capital IDEA program, and others like it, have put into practice many career cluster concepts inherent to the AchieveTexas College and Career Initiative(www.AchieveTexas.org), including such elements as career-oriented planning, comprehensive counseling, case management, postsecondary and community partnerships to promote personal growth and improved regional economies. The practices are not exclusive to AchieveTexas, nor do any of the programs indicate an affiliation, however, they do have successful strategies in common. Although it is a terrific program, it should be noted that Capital Idea is expensive. The per client cost is about \$6,000. The ABE program average student cost is somewhere around \$450 per year . Capital IDEA is associated with similar programs in Texas, each locally customized, operating in:

- i. San Antonio (1993), Project QUEST, <http://www.questsa.com>
- ii. Weslaco, McAllen and Brownsville (1995),
<http://www.vidacareers.org>
- iii. El Paso (1998), Project Arriba, <http://www.projectarriba.org>
- iv. Tucson, Arizona (1998), Jobpath, <http://www.jobpath.net/>

In 2004, 90% of students who enrolled in Capital IDEA completed the transition program, and 84% of those who then placed into college-level classes ultimately obtained an associate degree (Zafft, Kallenbach, Spohn, 2006). In contrast, only 43.4% of all ABE students in Texas completed the level in which they were enrolled during 2004-2005 (USDOE, OVAE, NRS, 2008)). The Texas model, Capital IDEA, provides

services for students entering GED, ESL or College Prep, and other programs. Their results represent an integration of all program areas.

7. **Advising Model** – provide admissions and education planning for ABE students. Once the Adult Basic Education program is integrated into the two State-funded systems that exist (TEA and THECB), all issues of outreach and advising, assessment, counseling, curriculum and instruction, interventions, accountability systems, monitoring of performance, attendance reporting, and program evaluation will be inherent to each system. These features are already in place.
8. **Targeted Assistance** In higher education there has been a long tradition of targeted assistance for special populations. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, re-entry programs for women were quite popular. In targeted assistance, adult literacy completers would receive extra assistance to alleviate the problems that constrain their ability to complete. This might include additional counseling, financial aid, remediation and perhaps child care.
9. **ESL PLUS: Vocational** El Paso, Texas, Socorro ISD Three companies participated in the internships: **Coca-Cola, Pep Boys, and J.C. Penney**. The Workforce Literacy Resource Center Project located at the El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas conducted 200 hours of Inquiry Sessions in collaboration with Socorro ISD. During the first 100 hours of Sales/Service Industry Related ESL, sixteen volunteer students enrolled. While transitioning to the second 100 hours of ESL, six students who were also participating in the displaced workers program left the Sales/Service ESL to enroll in their prescribed vocational training sponsored by the Texas Workforce Commission.

Out of the remaining ten students: one left the program to concentrate on the GED, and nine enrolled in the second 100 hours of Sales/Service Industry Related ESL. On Friday, August 25, 2006, the limited English proficient student participants, the Executive Director from the Upper Rio Grande Workforce Development Board, El Paso Community College and Socorro ISD celebrated with a certificate ceremony. Nice participants completed 200-hours of Sales/Service Industry related ESL and eight completed 50-hours of internships with local business & industry.

With the assistance of the Upper Rio Grande Workforce Development Board, five students who were still under the auspices of the displaced workers program received \$400 dollars in stipends for having completed the 50-hours of internships with local employers. Two others have received job offers, and a third participant has been offered a job after she completes the GED in three months. The retention rate of these classes was 100%. In addition, after 200-hours of Industry related ESL, three students were offered employment!

10. **ESL: Technology** *Sed de Saber* ("Thirst for Knowledge") is a portable, electronic learning system developed by Retention Education, Inc. It uses

storytelling, voice recording, games and review exercises to build and improve English language skills. *Sed de Saber* combines English as a second language (ESL) curriculum with the LeapFrog® Quantum LeapPad® Plus Microphone, allowing the learner to record, play back, and compare his/her voice to the word or phrase being learned, which increases confidence in pronunciation skills.

- a. **The Sed de Saber English for Everyone** program teaches English to Spanish speaking adults and improves communication in the community as well as in the workplace. The curriculum is aligned to CASAS and SCANS standards and teaches over 500 words and 340 phrases of vocabulary from everyday life.

Book One: Let's Begin

Book Two: A New Job

Book Three: Everyday Chores

Book Four: Health, Safety and
Well Being on the Job

Book Five: The Community

Book Six: "How Do You Say..."

- b. **The Sed de Saber English for Hospitality, Construction** teaches English to Spanish speaking adults and improves communication in the workplace as well as at home.
- c. **The Santa Ana, Ca. Chamber of Commerce** is purchasing 1,000 *Sed de Saber* systems to help educate members of the community via their various educational and business partners. Retention Education will provide up to 5,000 *Sed de Saber* systems in conjunction with sponsored programs during Hispanic Heritage Month. *Sed de Saber* is currently teaching conversational English to roughly 55,000 Hispanic workers in the foodservice, hospitality, and construction industries, as well as 10,000 Hispanic parents of English language-learning children via our nation's school systems.

