

Defining Student Success in WIOA

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Update

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Good morning everyone this is Anson Green. I want to welcome everyone to our latest update webinar, Defining Student Success the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

I'm Anson Green state director of adult education and literacy at the Texas Workforce Commission. I wanted to take this moment to let you two things:

First we will be recording this webinar and it available and then also the Texas Center for Adult Learning and Literacy will be releasing a special edition of the Quarterly newsletter specifically on WIOA this winter, so please look for that.

If you have questions about content in the webinar, please post them in the chat section. We will be compiling these questions and developing responses in a Question and Answer Document that will be sent after the presentation.

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WIOA strategically positions Adult Education and Literacy to play an integral role within a broader, interconnected workforce development system. This position will deliver greater access to educational services for our customers through the Texas Workforce Solutions delivery system and increase opportunities for a broader array of services available to students.

While the law aligns all program workforce and education services in many exciting and unprecedented ways, there are several notable enhancements we must embrace, plan, and prepare our programs for.

Under WIOA Adult Education and Literacy is expanded to place a focus on services that promote transitions at all levels to postsecondary education and training or employment. This shift programmatic philosophy is apparent throughout the law can be found within the guidance for the ESL (now called the English Literacy Acquisition program), a dramatically redesigned EL/Civics program (now called Integrated English Literacy Civics Education) and the performance accountability measure for high school equivalency. These familiar, but now expanded and

enhanced programs are joined by a variety of new program models that provide Adult Education and Literacy with much greater flexibility and services options to support students toward their career and higher education and training goals.

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I want to begin by providing a short legislative history comparing the old law the Workforce Investment Act with the new law The Workforce Innovation And Opportunity Act as well as review timelines and show you can start preparing your program and working with partners to implement changes under the new law.

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Now let's turn to a legislative history.

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Between 2003 and 2014 there was a lot occurring in Congress related to reauthorization of workforce legislation and adult education legislation but really not a lot of movement. There were several false starts where states believed we were close to a new law within those quickly disappeared.

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Then, in a year when no one believed congress could agree on anything, WIOA was passed and signed into law on July 22, 2014 and authorized until the year 2020.

It was passed under a very broad bipartisan majority in both the Senate and House of Representatives. The law promotes an unprecedented alignment at the federal, state, local and regional levels and builds upon proven practices, many practices that Texas has led in, such as industry sector strategies career pathways and work-based approaches to education training.

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WIOA has five titles you may often hear us refer to the adult education and literacy program as title II or the adult education and family literacy act, or AEFLA for short.

It is important to understand the other titles because under the new law they all play very interconnected rolls with a focal center on the title I workforce development system, our system of workforce solutions Boards and centers in the state of Texas.

Title I also includes a variety of other programs including youth build, apprenticeship, job Corps and provides the accountability structure for the whole law which I will discuss later. The title also includes the provisions for local and state plans.

Title III is the Wagner Peyser act which authorizes the public unemployment services systems in the state. Title IV makes amendments to the rehabilitation act of 1973. This title becomes very important for us and Texas with the transition of the

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative services to TWC and brings under the Commission the framework of vocational rehabilitation services in the state integrated with the workforce and Adult Education Literacy systems. Title V contains a variety of provisions repealing the old law and providing guidance on the transition of the new law.

I'm happy to say Texas is fortunate in that we are the only state in the nation that has all of the programs included under WIOA within one state agency.

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A little more on AEFLA history. Title II of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act has a long history going back to 1966 with the authorization of the adult education act. In 1998, the act we've been operating under for many years, the Workforce Investment Act, was passed, and now in 2014, we move into the era of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

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WIOA includes significant reforms. The law requires states to make drastic changes in many programs and I would say in all directions for adult education and literacy we see services aligning to objectives that the State of Texas has been implementing since the transfer of the program in 2013. The law strategically aligns workforce education and training services to support all jobseekers and employers, promotes a dramatic change in accountability and transparency for program service delivery, fosters regional collaboration and focuses on regional economies to deliver solutions.

Important to note is that it strengthens the strategic role of the workforce boards. I will go into more detail about that in a minute. The law also enhances overall job seeker services to the one-stop or workforce solution centers and provides multiple methods for improving services to employers including a promotion of work based our worksite training.

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The reforms also include providing greater access to high-quality education and training, providing and improving services to individuals with disabilities, providing a focus on disconnected youth and other vulnerable populations, increase in performance and quality in job Corps and strengthening connections to registered apprenticeship programs in the country.

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In reviewing the law I want to point out 4 major themes that will become very important for Adult Education Literacy providers to focus on. I would not say these are the only four themes but these are four that jumped out at me when I review the law.

These would be an emphasis on shared local planning across the titles, meaning workforce development boards vocational rehabilitation programs Adult Education Literacy and other providers working diligently together to develop local, integrated solutions.

Perhaps the greatest indicator that the law presents has to do with the shared accountability and performance across the titles of the law. This means measures that are used in the workforce system will be similar to those used in the adult education and literacy system. Changes in these accountability measures drive local shared implementation across the systems and in fact require it.

There's a strong emphasis on integrated programs, something we have been deploying for two years here in Texas, where workforce development providers are delivering services aligned and integrated with Adult Education and literacy and post secondary education and training. This interconnectivity means increased leveraged opportunities to promote student success and customer outcomes.

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We've been following implementation very closely at the commission since the passage of the law. I'm presenting here a timeline of some of the more important elements that we all should focus on in the coming months.

To go back a few months: Draft rules are published by the Federal agencies on April 16 these provide a glimpse at what I would call the operational, or driving instructions, of how to implement the law.

TWC submitted a very thorough and thoughtful comment on June 15 on all titles of the law, and I have shared that with the field and we gain those gained insights from you in the development of those.

On November 3 We released the draft of our combined state plan for comment. This period closed last week. These plans are due on March 3, 2016 submitted to the federal agencies.

Probably most anticipated is the release of the final regulations for which we provided comment on back in June. Official indication says that these will be completed in January or February 2016 and released. But the word on the street is that there are some delays and these may not be available until early spring.

With the release of these we will know greater details for many the elements of the law. In March and April of this year we will negotiate our performance measures for all titles of the law and then in July 1 the new program year will begin in the state plan will be effective.

I mentioned here something of great importance that I will explain later., but on July 1, we will also be the beginning of the implementation of a new program, or rather a

significantly revised program, now called the integrated English literacy in Civics education program. Keep that in mind and I will I'll discuss that in greater detail it in a minute.

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Let me move into deeper discussion of the law and what you can start doing to prepare your program for changes.

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I want to run through six different areas describing the expanded purpose in the law new and expanded local activities, the emphasis on local planning, system changes for the future competitions for Adult Education Literacy funding and requirements and Information future local grant competitions. Bare in mind that information I share here may shift as regulations are released, and most of what I'm presenting here is based on what is in the statute and what we know now.

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If we look at Title II and look at the purpose of the law and the purpose of that act we see there are 3 very familiar areas to us in Adult Education Literacy. The law still supports literacy and basic skills for employment and economic self-sufficiency, supports parents and Family members to be for partners in the development of children. So the family literacy purpose remains.

And there is still the purpose of assisting adults and completing high school and high school equivalency.

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What's new in the purpose is a focus on something were very familiar with in Texas already and it's a strong focus on transitions from Adult Education to post secondary education training in career pathways.

This is something the state has been promoting and you have been deploying for over two years, so Texas is well underway in implementation of this new purpose. Something else in the last expanded area of the purpose is that all now focus on specifically providing services to immigrants and English language learners, with an emphasis on professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.

This may seem as a surprise that this is a new area but if you look back at the Workforce Investment Act there really wasn't a very strong focus specifically on immigrants and English language learners.

So this part of the law expand something we do already in Texas - provides guidance around it - but I will also say that the service is the English language learners is perhaps the area of the law that sees the greatest enhancement in services.

I'm also very happy to see this emphasis on professionals with the degrees and credentials in their native countries. I know there are many programs out there have been focusing on creating career pathways for those very valuable internationally trained professionals in Texas.

A recent report I'm reviewing that will be released soon for the Migration Policy Institute says that within Texas of the limited English proficient population in the state 300,000 have some college or an associate's degree and 240,000 have a bachelors degree graduate or professional degree. That's over 700,000 English language learners in Texas that have with them higher education degrees and credentials. You will often refer hear me referred to this population is the workforce most left behind. They often languish in ESL classes even though they are highly trained and have very strong study habits and can accelerate their learning quickly compared to other ESL students who may have only a few years of formal education.

I applaud the efforts of many of you out there that are developing specialized ESL programs and accelerated learning pathways for this important population for the Texas economy.

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I want to focus on three new activities where we see some exciting new areas of development.

The first is workforce preparation activities, including digital literacy, integrated education and training, and the integrated English Literacy and Civics program that I mentioned to you earlier.

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The law provides for an activity called workforce preparation activities. These are programs or services that are a combination of basic academic critical thinking digital literacy and self-management skills such as utilizing resources and information acquiring information to be successful in the transition into postsecondary education training our appointment and other skills. We're very familiar with these types of program and know them often by the terms employability skills, soft skills and now in the THECB any boards need strategic plan "60 x 30 TX" they're called marketable skills.

Many of you are already providing classes with these types of curricula such as Bridge classes transitions classes and other types of on ramps to work or into college or integrated training programs.

I think all of us recognize the importance of these types of programs for students especially students at the higher levels that are transitioning into training programs.

We await the final regulations on this activity to provide further guidance.

I want to focus on a particular element of the workforce preparation activity known as digital literacy.

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The law uses the term digital literacy and takes the definition from the Museum and Library Services Act. Digital literacy or computer skills is something we've often desired and often provided in our programs even though this always presented a gray area in terms of allowable services because we were so tightly held to ensuring that these types of training programs including a reading, writing, or math element. Under the new law using technology and training individuals to be able to use different types of tools and technology is an allowable activity. This will greatly open up types of curricula we can implement our programs and services we can offer our students.

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Very familiar to us in Texas, and now in the law, is the integrated education and training model. Under the law this model must be provided with provision of adult education and literacy services, workforce preparation activities that I previously described, and workforce training activities which include a wide variety of activities such as occupational skills training, workplace training, skills upgrade training, entrepreneurial training, and job readiness training. These are now all allowable activities in adult education and literacy.

There's a stress on contextualization of the adult education content and the provision that these services be provided in a concurrent manner and that they have a single set of learning objectives.

There are draft regulations on the IET model, and we took some exception to these regulations when we provided our comments to the department of Education. We will wait to see what the final regulations look like and will keep you up to date; but for those of you who have labored and found great success in implementing models like accelerate Texas, the hard work has paid off because this is now an activity that we will see expand across Texas and we are very happy to see this included in the WIOA.

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The final of these new activities that I wanted to spend some time on is the Integrated EL Civics program. This is the EL civics program that we have implemented for over a decade that has some, and I would say some dramatic, changes under the new law. The first is that the program is codified and established in WIOA as a full program and funded annually. Before, EL Civics was always funded as a separate appropriation.

There's also some major components of EL Civics that have changed. We've always provided through EL Civics and English language component and a civics

component; but now there is a requirement that these two components be combined with workforce training through IET activities.

This will be a dramatic shift for us, and I think it's very important to note that it appears that Congress desires to really create an education and training model that provides the full menu of services for immigrants to not only integrate fully into the American civics function, but also into the workforce and into high paying jobs. Of course this also represents why the main reason why individuals come to the United States in the first place.

Notice that the focus on these programs is on demand occupations and that they be implemented in full coordination with the workforce system. There's also a focus in the language on the Integrated English Literacy and Civics programs to focus on professionals with degrees and credentials and previously mentioned. Needless to say, this is a very different model from the EL civics program that we have known.

We will be implementing pilots of this model this spring, and when the final regulations are released by the federal government we will be sharing these with you. But please take note that in the future, all grant recipients that receive English Literacy Civics funding will have to align their programs to these new requirements, including requirements around workforce training.

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I want to say a final word about the accountability and reporting system under WIOA.

The law dramatically transforms the accountability system across all core programs through six primary indicators of performance. These include two measures for employment, measures on earnings, measure on credential obtainment, measure on measurable skills gain and a measure on effectiveness to employers.

By looking at these measures we can easily see that the new law drives us towards more collaboration with colleges, training providers and workforce Boards. Let me provide a few examples of how the accountability model does this.

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The new law will drive us toward more collaboration with colleges and workforce boards

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If we look at measure iv, we something that represents quite a significant change in how we traditionally counted the high school equivalency measures in the state. Fortunately, the requirements in the new law along with the reason why most students go back to school in to get their high school equivalency, and that is to either go into training, into college or to go into the workforce or find promotion in the workforce.

Now under the new measure iv, credential obtainment, individuals will only be counted for state performance in the secondary school completion or high school equivalency completion if they also become employed or enrolled in an education and training program leading to a post-secondary credential within one year of exit.

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This means that high school equivalency that used to count on its own now must be combined with entered employment or entered into training and postsecondary services in each state's performance.

As I said, for students, that's not that big a deal, as students are entering GED or high school equivalency prep programs for those goals of career life or entered into training and college, but now we must consider what does this mean for our program curricula, our teacher preparation, and our alignment with our partners in the workforce development system and community college system.

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Another measure I want to focus on is measure 5, measurable skills gain.

This is the measure that has many of us scratching our heads the most in adult education and literacy because it doesn't speak directly to the adult education measures as we've traditionally know them through the educational functioning levels under WIA

But I do have information of what we might be able to glean from the discussions we've been having and what we also said in our comments that we made from TWC to the feds related to this measure.

What we think we will be seeing in this measure is an expansion...also what we've recommended in our comments...expansion beyond the traditional EFL gain measures under WIA - the 11 measures of adult education and literacy and starting to find other ways to collect information on measureable skills.

Suggested measures we made in our comments were to count tests completed within the GED or high school equivalency regimen so that students and programs could get credit as they went through the sequences of that test and passed those tests; or other measurable skill gain models such as entering college. You'll notice in the WIOA the entered postsecondary education and training is gone and it's replaced with a completion measure, so we've suggested adding an entered postsecondary education and training measure as an example measurable skills gain

So nothing is certain on any of these models yet; we have made comments; we have heard that there is a huge interest in expanding away from the educational functioning level model that we've had for years and including other types of measures. Hopefully when the final regulations are released, we will see a more

robust and durable method to capture measurable skills gains in adult education and literacy programs.

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Another element I want to focus on, and this is something many areas are actively involved in right now is a priority on local planning, and especially the role that the local workforce Boards must play in creating local four year plans that describe a variety of elements and include a collaboration of all entities carrying out the core programs under WIOA.

These plans are something that I know are under development right now and discussions are happening, and in those plans Boards must bring their partners together and describe how they expand access to training and employment and education services, particularly to individuals with barriers to employments, in an integrated fashion across all the different programs.

There will be a focus in the plan on how the Boards will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential, and measures and information on how the local area will provide measures of continuous improvement to eligible providers of service; and very importantly – and this is something we’re watching closely - the board will have a very active role in coordinating the activities carried out under AEL, and review of local proposals submitted in the future submitted under Title II.

This is an area that we’re not exactly sure and we’re eager to see the final regs – in the future, in order to ensure that adult education and literacy services are directly aligned with the needs of the local economy and workforce, in the future the Boards will play a role in the review of local applications that will be submitted under future competitions at the state.

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I want to begin closing by saying probably an area that signals Congress’ intent to really focus this law in a dramatic direction to being responsive towards employers in the country and here in Texas has to do with an expansion of the eligible providers of adult education and literacy services. Traditionally, and these are still retained in the new law – traditionally these funds were only available to entities such as higher education institutions, local education agencies, non profits, libraries, public house authorities and other entities - Added to that list in the new law is employers, so really sending a signal that employers are a driving factor in WIOA - they are also eligible if combined with one of the other eligible entities as applicants for adult education and literacy funds in the future. So this means that employers would have to partner with a college, or a school district or a service center or a non profit, but could apply for adult education funds to provide AEL services.

To me that is a very striking example of the tenor of the new law and the fact that there’s greater access and reach into getting employers engaged in the public

workforce development system and especially in the adult education and literacy system.

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I want to thank everyone for your time and listening to this webinar and viewing this webinar; as I mentioned at the beginning, we'll be recording this and sending it out, and we'll be developing a question and answer document so I'm very happy to the questions that have come in and we will be compiling those and probably have those release in January when folks come back from break but I'm very happy to begin this journey to defining student success in WIOA. Texas has been a leader in this integration with the WDS and post secondary delivery system and now we are well positioned to lead with great vigor and we move into full WIOA implementation. Thank you very much and have a great afternoon.