Supporting Transition from Adult Education to Postsecondary Education and Employment in California

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Introduction

The purpose of AB 86, the legislation that launched what is now the California Adult Education Program (CAEP), was "... to rethink and redesign an educational system that creates seamless transitions for students across adult schools and community colleges to accelerate academic and career success in order to earn a living wage." (emphasis added) Since 2014, the seventy-one adult education consortia across the state have built programs and systems to support these seamless transitions for the many Californians who need language, basic skills and other forms of instruction to reach their academic and career objectives.²

Transition encompasses a very wide range of activities. In the context of this research project, transition is broadly defined as a student's progression from one of the mandated program areas (adult basic education, high school diploma/GED education, English as a second language, short-term career technical education, pre-apprenticeship, programs for adults with disabilities, and parent education) into community college, short-term training, or employment (Figure 1).

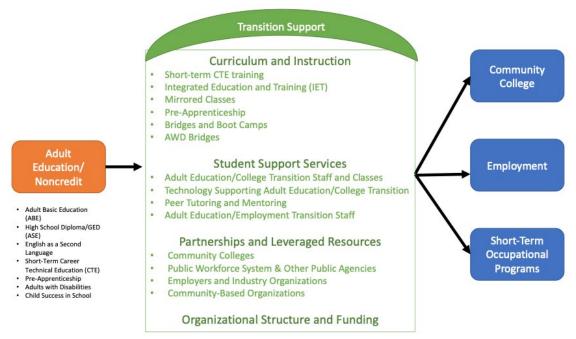


Figure 1: Transition Support from Adult Education to Community College, Employment, & Short-Term CTE

Identifying Effective Transition Practices: Purpose and Methods

¹ 2016-17 AEBG Annual Plan Template

² 5.2 million Californians lack a high school diploma or GED (US Census, American Community Survey 2015) . 6.2 million are English language learners (McHugh, Margie and Morawski, Madeleine. (2015) Immigrants and WIOA Services: Comparison of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Native- and Foreign-Born Adults in California. Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.)

The purpose of this brief is to identify a range of ways that CAEP adult education consortia and their partners are supporting student transition. By capturing these practices, CAEP will complement quantitative data captured in the Adult Education Pipeline dashboard of the California Community College LaunchBoard data clearinghouse. The brief is intended to inform CAEP practitioners about creative solutions developed by their peers and inspire further innovation and collaboration to better serve students transitioning to postsecondary education and employment.

To identify and learn about these effective practices, interviews were conducted with administrators and instructors representing 30 consortia in all regions of the state. Interviewees were asked about the roles their institutions play in supporting transition through curriculum and instruction, student support services, community connections and referrals, and organizational structure and funding. They were asked to describe the partnerships, staff roles, data management tools, and funding sources that support their work in this area. Responses were analyzed to identify widely-used effective practices, as well as innovations that stood out for their creativity, resourcefulness, or impact.

Curriculum and Instruction

The consortia interviewed cited a broad spectrum of instructional programs ranging from those situated completely at the adult school level to many that involve collaboration with college or community partners, providing pathways from basic skills education to noncredit short-term training or credit-bearing community college programs. A common aspect of many of the noted offerings is the effort to make the next steps on the education and career pathways explicit to students, and linking or scaffolding programs to foster transition.

Short-term CTE Training

Consortia described providing a range of **short-term career technical education (CTE) programs**, many of which partner closely with employers and yield industry-recognized credentials to ease students' transition to employment. One consortium has developed a Career Skills Institute, offering short-term training leading to credentials and employment opportunities in business, information technology, and digital media. Other consortia have built or refined CTE programs that prepare students in a short period of time for entry into specific occupations or apprenticeships. One consortium is preparing to offer multiple short-term training programs relevant to small business development under the umbrella of a new Entrepreneurship Center. Often these short-term programs incorporate job readiness skills training, on topics such as resume writing, interviewing, and a range of "soft skills" that are often cited as lacking by employers.

Several members of the Riverside/About Students Adult Education Consortium offer training that prepares students for jobs at the adult schools' member school districts in high-demand occupations, such as food handling and custodial work. Classes were custom-designed to respond to hiring needs, and program graduates receive certification that makes them eligible to fill open positions at the districts. Collaboration among consortium members means that lessons learned from this innovative

practice are shared in hopes of scaling it regionally.

Integrated Education and Training (IET)

A growing number of CAEP programs describe **integrating ESL**, **English**, **and math skills with occupational training**, often involving both basic skills and a CTE instructor as co-teachers. This integrated education and training (IET) model accelerates progress toward acquisition of occupational skills and fosters learning of language and math skills by contextualizing them to the target CTE area and job classifications. One consortium described building on this model to also incorporate paid work-based learning and student services, to better equip students for success during the program and upon graduation.

One challenge in offering IET is **covering the costs of two teachers in one classroom**. In several consortia, two adult school teachers co-instruct, such as in one program that merges Home Health Aide training and an ESL sequence of classes. The most cost-effective approach mentioned by several consortia, however, involves a college CTE instructor co-teaching with an adult school basic skills or ESL teacher. While CAEP funding does not allow for payment of a college credit instructor, an adult school teacher may be paid for by CAEP (or other) funds while co-teaching in the same class with a college instructor. It is important to note that adult school teachers and community college instructors co-teaching in the IET context need time to prepare and plan, as well as professional development in this new form of collaborative instruction. Consortia reported utilizing a range of funding sources to support this planning and development by IET teachers, including CAEP, community college Strong Workforce Program (SWP), and WIOA Title II funds.

Delta Sierra Adult Education Alliance created a one-month bridge to allied health CTE programs that used IET to make introductory career education accessible to English learners. The class was co-taught by a college health science instructor and an adult school ESL teacher, who collaborated to deliver a seamless classroom experience. Student persistence in the class was high, and graduates continued on to credit-bearing CTE programs having already achieved certification in CPR and First Aid.

Mirrored Classes

Community colleges are able to offer "mirrored" classes, or concurrent noncredit and credit course sections that take place in the same classroom. Mirrored classes offer several advantages for adult learners. By taking a college class as noncredit — whether at an adult school or a community college — students avoid having to complete the college credit appplication process (which can be a significant obstacle, especially for undocumented students), incur tuition costs, or worry about grades. A non-credit course is a low-risk option for a student who is still exploring occupational interests, because it can be repeated if necessary and will not count against financial aid limits. Several consortia described using mirrored classes to assure slots for adult education students in community college CTE courses, and to facilitate the transition from noncredit to credit programs. Two consortia noted that they offer all six levels of the college-level ESL course sequence in a mirrored format at their partnering adult schools.

South Bay Adult Education Consortium's community college partner, El Camino College, has created noncredit mirrored classes for all of their credit ESL classes, including three levels of grammar, reading, and listening & speaking courses. Some lower-level classes are offered at partnering adult schools, while others take place at the college but are open to adult school students. Each noncredit section enrolls both adult school students and community college students. El Camino also offers a range of noncredit VESL classes in industries such as health care and construction trades, and is exploring offering mirrored noncredit/credit CTE course sections in the future.

Pre-Apprenticeship

A number of consortia are offering or developing **pre-apprenticeship programs**, some of which are registered with the Department of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) and facilitate direct entry into registered apprenticeships (RAs). Pre-apprenticeships can prepare students for a single apprenticeable occupation, or for a range of occupations (e.g. building trades, health care). Several consortia described making apprenticeship accessible to students with limited basic academic skills by using IET to integrate contextualized ESL and Math. One consortium has developed a general Math Preparation for Apprenticeship course that functions as a pre-apprenticeship. Another consortium invites ESL students to enroll alongside non-ESL students in its exploratory pre-apprenticeship certificate, which leads graduates to multiple RAs. A consortium with success in IET and strong partnerships with community college apprenticeship programs is now in the process of developing pre-apprenticeships, transforming several entry-level CTE programs to link them formally to RAs.

Sonoma County Adult Education Consortium responded to emerging labor market demand following recent large wildfires by launching a pre-apprenticeship-to-apprenticeship pathway in Landscaping for Fire Abatement and Prevention. The noncredit pre-apprenticeship, offered by Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC), includes bilingual short-term classroom training and hands-on work experience on the SRJC farm. Students are prepared to enter an arborist apprenticeship program offered in conjunction with several major tree service firms, or — through a partnership between SRJC and the County of Sonoma — to enter employment on fire abatement crews. The pre-apprenticeship classes also stack directly into SRJC's Natural Resources certificate and associate's degree. Contextualized ESL and math courses are offered for students who need additional basic skills instruction.

Bridges and Boot Camps

Bridge programs prepare adult education students to enter and succeed in credit-bearing postsecondary education and training leading to career-path employment. Bridge programs typically provide a combination of academic and career technical instruction, along with college readiness support, career guidance, counseling, and transition support services. Boot camps meet a similar goal and are generally offered in a more compressed timeframe, making them especially valuable for displaced workers needing rapid employment. A number of consortia offer bridge programs and boot camps to assist with the transition from adult education to credit programs at the community college.

Inland Adult Education Consortium currently offers its five-week summer bridge program for adult education students transitioning to community college in an entirely online format. The program includes a student development course, a math refresher, EOPS counseling, and support services for students with disabilities. Students are assisted with goal-setting, career exploration, and financial planning; given an overview of the technology applications needed for online study; and oriented to the community college campus and resources. The counseling course also equips students with college success strategies, stress management techniques, and study skills.

Adults with Disabilities (AWD) Bridges

While serving adults with disabilities is one of the mandated program areas under AB 104, a number of consortia have struggled to secure adequate resources to serve this population. Consortia who reported success in this area have leveraged partnerships with outside agencies and willing employers to create effective **AWD training programs** and assure transitions to continuing education or employment. The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), local social service agencies, and employers have been important partners. One program utilizes college WorkAbility II funds and relationships with local employers to create paid work experience for participants. Another key feature of successful programs is a flexible approach to creating an educational plan for each student based on the individual's needs and transition goals.

Mid-Alameda County Consortium offers multiple programs to address the training and employment needs of adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Each participating student receives assistance from adult school staff, in partnership with Disability Determination services (DDS) and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) counselors, to craft an individual educational plan. Courses are offered in Life Skills, Functional Academics, Workplace Skills, and Community Access Skills. The program leverages funds from a variety of state and local agencies and engages employers in food service, landscaping, hospitality, and other industries to secure internships and employment.

Student Support Services

Adult Education/College Transition Staff

The consortia interviewed noted the critical role of student support staff in helping adult education students set goals, traverse the path between adult and post-secondary education, and address obstacles that can stand in the way of successfully moving forward. These staff have various jobs titles — transition specialist, outreach specialist, navigator, transition liaison — but in all cases they ensure a warm hand-off and help students cross boundaries and progress toward their goals. Transition staff may be located at the community college or at an adult school, but the majority have some form of presence at both. Several consortia have transition staff co-located part-time at sites of community organizations serving immigrants, formerly incarcerated clients, and others. A vast number of transition specialists are bilingual. Several consortia described regularly scheduled meetings where transition staff and other student services representatives from adult schools, community colleges, and other partners compare notes about student needs and conduct in-service training.

Citrus Adult Education Consortium uses community college SWP funding to secure the time of a parttime college counselor as a transition specialist serving both the adult schools and Citrus College. With access to data from both educational systems, the transition specialist actively tracks the progress of students as they transition to college classes. The transition specialist also teaches college Student Success classes online and at adult schools and supports most of these students' transition to Citrus College.

Several consortia described aligning transition support services to the community college Guided Pathways process. Guided Pathways provides students with, "...clear, educationally coherent program maps that include specific course sequences, progress milestones, and program learning outcomes... The maps help to simplify decision-making for students by providing intentional opportunities for exploration and informed choices." A major focus of Guided Pathways involves students' preparing for and getting on a clearly-defined path, which can include collaboration with adult education consortia. One consortium described a lengthy and deliberate process to align their adult education counseling with the colleges' new Guided Pathways counseling approach. Another consortium is accessing the colleges' SWP funds to enable adult education's participation in Guided Pathways planning and pilot projects.

Adult Education/Community College Transition Support Classes

An important venue for sharing transition-related information and supporting student preparation and planning is in the classroom. Consoria described various types of **counseling classes** on topics such as career exploration, college success, academic readiness, or navigating the path to community college. Students in these classes access valuable information, as well as individualized support with their own college readiness, college application, and future career pathway planning. One consortium requires a career exploration class of all its CTE students, who benefit from both classroom activities and job shadowing. Another consortium requires a similar college and career course for all its GED/HSE program completers, to help them plan for the steps ahead. This sort of course is typically highly tailored to adult learners, designed to help them navigate the specific challenges of moving from adult education to post-secondary studies.

Southwest Riverside Adult Education Consortium includes a customized five-week College and Career Planning class with each of its CTE programs. These classes — which are currently offered for students in Child Development, Culinary Arts, Digital Communication, Business Communication, Automotive Service Technology, and the Construction Pre-Apprenticeship — include soft skills contextualized for the industry and lead to certificates of completion. The classes intentionally enroll college students alongside transitioning noncredit adult education students, to create community and shared interest among these blended student groups.

Technology Supporting Adult Education/Community College Transition

³ https://www.cccco.edu/College-Professionals/Guided-Pathways

Across the CAEP landscape, student support staff, often working in tandem with teachers, employ technology effectively to stay in touch with students and make needed transition information and assistance accessible. Many consortia spoke of **online platforms** that allow adult education students to make appointments with counselors, access planning tools, and locate potential employment. A number of consortia mentioned "intrusive counseling" in online instruction, whereby transition staff participate in synchronous online classes to share key transition information and identify student needs. The necessity of offering support services online has also hastened the development of **data sharing agreements** within consortia to make coordinated transition services and case management more efficient. One consortium has put the **noncredit and credit CCC Apply process online** on a platform where students can view a bilingual tutorial on the application process, and an Outreach Specialist can review students applications for completeness and message other support staff when the application is complete.

Peer Tutoring and Mentoring to Support Transition

A number of consortia engage more academically advanced students to support adult learners during the transition process. One effective model involves community college students **mentoring near-peers** as they complete their adult school classes and move into their first college experience. Other programs use **students as academic tutors** to support learners' readiness for college-level instruction.

North Orange Adult Education Consortium's ESL Mentoring Program hires six student mentors to follow adult school students during their first two semesters of community college classes. The ESL mentors lead campus tours that include showing students where to buy books and how to find their classrooms and credit student services. The mentors also provide individualized assistance with CCC Apply, financial aid or California Dream Act applications, credit class registration, and anything else needed to make new students comfortable in the community college environment.

Adult Education/Employment Transition Staff

As adult schools' have renewed their emphasis on transition to employment, some consortia have assigned staff to assist students with career planning, job readiness skills, and job placement. One consortium has a Regional Career Navigator and Job Developer who focuses on connecting adult school students with the local Workforce Development Board services and to jobs. Another consortium uses CAEP funds to support a career advisor at each adult education site. Additionally, many consortia work collaboratively with their local workforce development system (see Partnerships, below) to leverage staffing and augment the adult schools' limited staff capacity for employment-related services.

Partnerships

Partnerships— both within adult education consortia and with key community organizations and employers— are essential to addressing the many needs of adult learners in transition. Given the limited funding and purview of adult education consortia, their collaboration with community colleges, the public

workforce system, government agencies, employers and industry organizations, and community-based organizations (CBOs) provides the resources, knowledge base, and specific services necessary to achieve genuine impact on students' transition success.

Community Colleges

Community colleges are themselves consortium members and providers of noncredit adult education, collaboratively addressing the immense needs for English language instruction, high school diploma or equivalency preparation, and short-term CTE training. Additionally, colleges engage their credit-side instructors, counselors, outreach teams, data managers, admissions personnel, and others to support transitions into the college. A range of intra-consortium collaborative practices have been mentioned in this brief, including co-located classes, co-teaching and counseling, data-sharing agreements, and enrollment assistance. With the enactment of SB 554, consortia now enroll adult learners pursuing a high school diploma in credit-bearing college courses, capturing the benefits of high school dual enrollment programs. One consortium described adopting the community college's online teaching platform (Canvas) for its online adult school classes, to ease students' transition to distance learning at the college.

Coast Adult Education Consortium developed an Inter-agency Services Agreement (ISA) that enables its partner community colleges to pay adjunct faculty and qualified adult school teachers to offer noncredit ESL and short-term CTE classes at the adult schools. This agreement allows for the colleges to collect FTES payments and the adult schools to document increased enrollments and outcomes. The arrangement takes advantage of the colleges' capacity to grow, has potential to greatly increase the adult schools' class capacity, and creates a seamless transition from adult school to community college through co-enrollment. Other consortia are now looking at the potential to use the ISA approach in their regions.

Public Workforce Development System

Many consortia reported innovative and substantial partnerships with their Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) that provide adult school students with job search information, training opportunities, and assistance with job placements. Some consortia co-locate transition staff at the local AJCCs or dedicate staff to co-enrollment, navigation, and resource-leveraging between the two systems. In some consortia, the AJCC and adult school fully co-locate their services at an adult school, college, or AJCC facility. Several consortia mentioned how putting their short-term training programs on the statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) opened the door for providing WIOA Title I supports (including training vouchers, work-experience and on-the-job funds, tools, work clothing, childcare, and transportation assistance) to eligible transitioning students. A number of consortia described their commitment to tracking student outcomes across the adult education and workforce systems, either by entering all students in CalJobs or by tracking student contacts with a navigator who bridges the adult school and the AJCC.

GlendaleLEARNS is a notable example of deep consortium/LWDB partnership. The CAEP consortium coordinator reports to both the community college dean of adult education and the LWDB executive director, is housed at the LWDB, and coordinates a co-located adult school in the AJCC. The coordinator actively facilitates career pathway development and student co-enrollment in WIOA and adult education programs.

Other Public Agencies

In addition to partnering with the public workforce development system, consortia worked with several other public agencies to bring resources to adult learners and leverage funding. As noted above, **DOR** provides funding and direct assistance to adults with disabilities. The **California Department of Corrections (DOC) and county probation departments** are essential partners in serving adults in and exiting the justice system. The **CalWORKs** program, supported by the California Department of Social Services, (CDSS) brings resources to student parents via colleges' EOPS programs. The **California Employment Development Department (EDD) and the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB)** distribute discretionary grants — such as the English Language Learner Navigator and Co-Enrollment grants — that augment the capacity of some consortia and allow for the seeding of innovative practices. Also, multiple consortia have established close relationships with their **public libraries**, which provide convenient and trusted community locations for basic literacy instruction and bridges into the adult schools.

North Central Adult Education Consortium not only collaborates extensively with its public workforce system (cross-training staff, and offering adult education classes at all AJCCs); it partnered with its LWDB to pursue a competitive *Prison to Employment* grant from the CWDB and the DOC that supports co-location of adult education classes and services both at the county jails and at the AJCCs for reentry clients. This regional partnership also provides services at a halfway house in the community to better reach individuals newly transitioning from the justice system.

Employers and Industry Organizations

Partnerships with employers, unions, and industry organizations are pivotal to adult education consortia's strategies to address students' employment needs and the great demand for skilled workers in a range of sectors. Several consortia described local employers providing much needed work-based learning opportunities (such as internships and job shadowing) for students in short-term training programs. Others referenced how employers collaborated to develop short-term training curriculum and created adaptive opportunities for students with disabilities. Consortia that offer pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships worked actively with employers and unions to design these on-ramps to living wage jobs. One consortium described the benefits of having the LWDB and the Chamber of Commerce on the consortium board, weighing in on regional strategies and activities. Another consortium created a cross-consortium position of regional career navigator/job developer to connect adult education students to LWDB resources and jobs.

Capital Adult Education Regional Consortium is one of many partners of the Sacramento Valley Manufacturing Initiative (SVMI). Through this partnership, manufacturers in the region provide technical expertise, resources and leadership for the Manufacturing Skills Center, located at the Sacramento City Unified School District-Adult Education's Charles A. Jones Careers and Education Center. The goal of the project is to create a menu of education and training services ranging from one day to nine months to prepare students for high-demand, high-quality jobs in local manufacturing industries. The participation of the region's adult schools ensures that adult education students have access to these training programs.

Community-Based Organizations

Many of the consortia interviewed reported that partnerships with local community-based organizations (CBOs) have been key to reaching and serving students who might otherwise not enroll in adult education. A broad spectrum of organizations collaborate with consortia to recruit students, offer onsite classes, and provide social services in multiple languages. Consortia serving undocumented students, in particular, draw upon the resources of trusted CBOs to provide legal aid, family supports, training programs, and co-case management. Consortia also cited collaboration with CBOs to provide tailored services to reentry clients, CalWORKs parents, and adults with disabilities. One consortium works closely with United Cerebral Palsy to engage employers willing to support students' transition from AWD programs to employment. Another consortium has established a memorandum of understanding with a non-profit employment services organization; the adult school delivers industry-certified courses, and the CBO provides job placement support.

State Center Adult Education Consortium works with CBOs to address the needs of their area's many undocumented residents. Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CIVIC), Centro de la Familia, United Farmworkers, and the Educational Leadership Foundation contribute legal assistance, classroom space for ESL classes, and family support services. With assistance from another CBO, Immigrant Rising, Madera Community College runs the Dream Center, a one-stop resource for DACA students offering assistance with AB 540 opportunities, DACA renewals, legal aid, mental health counseling, and academic advising.

Organizational Structure and Funding

A final noteworthy theme from the interviews is that consortia are intentional and creative in their funding of transition programs and services. Following the significant cuts to adult education funding in 2009 and with the advent of CAEP, adult education consortia have worked regionally to plan service delivery and distribute finite resources across their members. To address immense unmet needs, some consortia have decided not only to divide funds amongst themselves, but to **retain funds at the consortium level for joint activities**. Consortia also described the ways they tap the strengths of multiple members through collaboration, such as adult school/community college co-teaching and adult school/AJCC co-counseling. One key factor in this collaboration is that while adult schools generally have a fixed budget that limits what classes they can offer, community colleges have a capacity and incentive to grow the number of courses they can provide and to expand their enrollment. This situation leads to interagency service

agreements such as those described in this report, which capitalize on the community colleges' capacity to teach adult education students and ease their transition to college instruction.

ADVANCE (Lake Tahoe) Adult Education Consortium takes a notable approach to its decision-making and funding allocation. Because the consortium was new in 2014, it was not restricted by the fiscal requirements of "maintenance of effort" that dictate some consortia's distribution of funds. The ADVANCE governing board — which includes a diversity of partners along with adult education providers, including the chamber of commerce and employer and community member representatives — elects to retain most of the funds at the consortium level. These resources are dedicated to regional staffing and activities, including personalized pathway planning and holistic case management, and the incubation of innovative and collaborative programs. ADVANCE also receives non-CAEP funding by providing WIOA Title I case management services under a subcontract agreement with the LWDB, and technical assistance contracts with other regional organizations.

Many consortia described the importance of also accessing funding beyond CAEP and WIOA Title II to expand their programming and services for adult learners. As described elsewhere in this report, they leverage federal WIOA Title I funds via the LWDBs, state and county grants and services, public library resources, community college FTES and SWP funds, union and employer support for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, and employer-based internships and other on-the-job training opportunities. Consortia emphasized the vital role these non-adult education resources — and the collaborative relationships that underlie them — play in their ability to meet the various transition-related needs of adult learners.

Conclusion

Interviews with CAEP consortia revealed a number of common themes in the ways they have taken on the challenges of supporting adult learners' transitions to employment or training. All have made efforts to leverage partnerships and resources - within their consortium and with a range of community, government, and industry entities - to maximize opportunities for adult education students to progress toward their identified goals. Striking is their commitment to move beyond institutional boundaries and develop collaborative solutions to their students' needs. To address the considerable demand for basic skills and English language instruction in their communities, as well as the need for avenues to living-wage employment, they have developed an impressive array of programs and support systems. Transition staff and other student support workers and peer mentors play important roles in ensuring that adult learners can successfully navigate these and other community services on the road to additional education or gainful work.

Looking ahead, there will be many avenues to build upon the range of effective practices outlined in this brief. Based on the input from those interviewed, it is clear that there is a great deal of interest among CAEP practitioners in creating additional venues for peer exchange of effective transition practices. The complexity of the multiple public systems and community partnerships involved in CAEP consortia — and the opportunities this presents for student educational success and career growth — suggest the value in strengthening community among these statewide leaders in adult education.

Additional Resources

For more information on specific effective practices, and for contact information for exemplary programs, please contact CAEP TAP at tap@caldulted.org or (888) 827-2324. In Spring 2021, CAEP TAP will launch the Adult Education website (previously known as Practice with Promise). The new Adult Education site will be a repository of innovative, emerging, and model adult education programs throughout California that have demonstrated positive outcomes for students, agencies, and/or consortia. Model programs will be reviewed and added to the repository via a nomination process and will be awarded annually at the CAEP Summit. Beyond highlighting adult education programs, Adult Education will be a source for current research and practice aligned to the state priorities, CCCCO Vision of Success, and the CDE AEO State Plan. Practitioners are also invited to connect with colleagues eager to share about their program successes either individually or via online communities of practice. Stay tuned for more information and for the launch date.