Adult Career Pathways

PROVIDING A SECOND CHANCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION
Our Plans for Today

- Institute Overview/CORD Background
- Adult Career Pathways Vision
- Section 1: Target Populations
  - Roundtable Discussions
  - Report Out/Q&A
- Section 2: Components of the ACP Model
- Section 3: Building Partnerships/Organizing Employers
- Section 4: Recruitment, Assessment and Career Ladders
- Section 5: Program Costs and Student Support Needs
- Wrap-up/Share Resources
• Center for Occupational Research and Development
• Non-profit, based in Texas
• Founded in 1979 to serve educators across U.S.
• Major Areas of Focus:
  ▶ Support for high schools, community colleges, industry
  ▶ Focused on “The Neglected Majority”
  ▶ Curriculum and faculty development/Technical assistance
  ▶ Contextual teaching and learning/Integrated instruction
  ▶ Math, science, advanced technologies
  ▶ Customized training for technician education
  ▶ National Career Pathways Network
Examples of Adult Ed Work

- Advanced technology training materials
  - Laser/electro-optics
  - Nuclear technician training
  - Robotics and Automated Systems
- Workforce Mathematics and Mathematics Foundations
- Transformations and Transformations Bridge programs
- Necessary Skills Now soft-skills curricula
- Customized materials for industry
Leading Change in Education

- Tech Prep/Associate Degree: A Win-Win Experience (1991)
- Opening Minds, Opening Doors (1994)
- Career Pathways: Education with a Purpose (2005)
Adult Career Pathways

- What is it? What’s Different?
  - Supports the unemployed and underemployed
  - Supports career-limited adults needing extraordinary services
  - Requires significant employer and community engagement
  - Focuses on long-term solutions with short-term objectives
  - Offers a model that’s flexible and adaptable to local/regional needs

*To be lifelong earners, we must all be lifelong learners.*
ACP Program Benefits to States

1. By providing a pipeline of employees who are able to meet the workforce needs of employers
2. By improving the earning power and self-sufficiency of low-income workers
3. By creating an environment in which educators, employers, and public officials are jointly involved in the formulation of state workforce and economic development policy
4. By leading to a more efficient and effective use of publicly allocated workforce development and education resources

5. By creating a mechanism for holding workforce development systems accountable for results

6. By providing a system that enables current and dislocated workers to retrain and retool
Section 1: Target Populations

- High School Dropouts
- High School Completers w/No College
- College Noncompleters
- Foreign Born U.S. Residents
- Returning Veterans
- Ex-offenders
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High School Dropouts</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many?</strong> Over 6 million; more if GEDs are excluded and older adults are included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic makeup:</strong> Disproportionately minority (The graduation rate for minorities has been estimated at around 50%).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong> More males than females</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family status:</strong> Many from low-income and single-parent homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services currently available:</strong> Job Corps, YouthBuild, Service Corps, Challenge, AmeriCorps, Workforce Investment Act, Youth Opportunity Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special problems:</strong> Lack of family support system; lack of literacy, technical, and employability skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special needs:</strong> Remediation, employability skills, core academic and technical skills</td>
</tr>
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High School Completers – No College

**Snapshot**

**High School Completers with No College**

**How many?** 1.5 million per year (derived by subtracting the number of first-time college enrollees from the number of high school graduates [source: NCES])

**Ethnic makeup:** Disproportionately minority

**Family status:** Disproportionately from low-income households

**Services currently available:** Community colleges and technical schools (which offer credential programs that can be completed in as little as one year)

**Special problems:** Poverty, unemployment or underemployment

**Special needs:** Advanced (postsecondary level) skills
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>College Noncompleters</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many?</strong> 0.5 million students per year (Carey, 2004); 19% of total population age 25–34 (= 7,600,000, using Census Bureau figures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic makeup:</strong> Disproportionately minority</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong> More men than women; gender gap more pronounced among minorities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family status:</strong> Disproportionately low-income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services currently available:</strong> None specifically for this group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special problems:</strong> Underemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special needs:</strong> Means of dealing with personal commitments while going back to school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreign-Born Residents

Snapshot

Foreign-Born Residents

How many? 33.5 million (in 2003)

Ethnic makeup: 53.3% Latin American; 25.0% Asian; 13.7% European; 8.0% Other; largest single group is Mexican (approx 10 million)

Family status: Compared to native population, tend to have large families and (among Hispanics) are more likely to be relatively low in education and socioeconomic factors.

Services currently available: Title I and II of WIA, Refugee Resettlement Program, TANF, HEA; many (but not enough) community colleges and nonprofit organizations offer ESL programs.

Special problems: Especially among Hispanics (of which people born in Mexico are the largest subgroup): Many lack high school diplomas; many lack the resources to move beyond low-paying jobs

Special needs: Remediation, language training, information about career options, high-level skills
Returning Veterans

Snapshot

Returning Veterans

How many? 238,000 a year

Ethnic makeup: Approximately mirrors the general population (except for Hispanics, who are more heavily represented in the general population)

Gender: 85% male, 15% female

Family status: 60% married; many have children

Educational status: Most have at least high school diplomas.

Services currently available: MGIB, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans’ Employment and Training Service

Special problems: Many do not recognize the need for postsecondary education or have obligations that make pursuit of postsecondary education difficult.

Special needs: Depending on nature of service, technical and job-search skills
### Ex-offenders

**How many?** Approx 630,000 returnees per year

**Ethnic makeup:** Much higher percentage of minority than in the general population

**Gender:** 93% male, 7% female

**Family status:** Many (esp. women) are parents of minor children.

**Educational status:** About half the total inmate population [approx 2,000,000] receives educational or vocational training (this percentage is decreasing); about 40% have neither HS diploma nor GED (% higher among minorities); young inmates less well educated than older inmates; men less well educated than women

**Services currently available:** In-house prerelease, educational, and vocational programs (but these have not kept pace with demand); nonprofit programs such as the Safer Foundation and RIO (Texas); federal programs such as FPI and PIE

**Special problems:** Wide variety of antisocial behaviors including substance abuse and gang-related activities; lack of technical and employability skills

**Special needs:** Counseling, occupational and academic education and training, substance abuse treatment (in many cases), wide range of social and family services (including housing and transportation)
Roundtable Discussion: Adult Populations
Section 2

Components of the Adult Career Pathways Model
Seven Components

Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education
6 Elements Critical to Success of ACP Program

1. Students must commit to at least one semester or a 14-18 week period of full-time education. (Prep Stage)

2. Students must have access to part-time employment in chosen career field following Prep Stage.

3. Employers in the same fields who typically think of themselves as competitors must be willing to work together in support of the program, especially by hiring students after the Prep Stage.
6 Elements Critical to Success of ACP Program

4. Employers in similar fields must be willing to commit to common “career ladder” in which each student is promoted, given a raise, and/or publicly commended each time they complete a stage of education/training.

5. Curriculum should integrate the seven components of an ACP program in each 4-5 month period.

6. Programs must provide frequent rewards/recognition so students can mark their progress and see the “light at the end of the tunnel.”
Program Format

- Fulltime Student
- Part Time Student
- Fulltime Employee
- Part Time Employee

1. Prep
2. Foundation
3. Building
4. Advancement
5-7 Continue Advancement

Seven Stages

Career Progress

Education Progress
Finding Realistic Answers to Challenges

- Will employers be willing to make the necessary investment in human capital?
- Will employers who normally would compete with one another for highly skilled workers be willing to cooperate for the sake of workforce development in their communities?
- Will local employers, college administrators, and state and regional funding and accreditation groups agree on a common curriculum for the ACP that will match their career ladders?
- Will there be sufficient unity, flexibility, and cooperation among colleges, employers, states, and community-based organizations to support the personal needs of adult students until they can “learn enough to earn enough”? 

Roundtable Discussion:
Components of the ACP Model
Section 3

Building the Partnership/Organizing Employers
The Four Legs of Support

- Employers within an industry sector
- Educators (Adult education providers, community and technical colleges)
- Community leaders
- High-level policymakers
Reasons for Community Participation

- Help alleviate critical worker shortages
- Give unemployed and underemployed adults opportunity to succeed in well-paying jobs, helping themselves and their communities
- Make community attractive to new businesses because of increased availability of trained workers
- Reduce unemployment and social services costs for communities
- Increase tax revenues by increasing employment
ACP Stakeholder Return on Investment

- **Community Leaders**
  - Alignment of economic development vision and workforce advancement
  - Enhance labor pool to retain (and attract) employers
  - Increase income levels in the community
  - Reduce poverty, crime, and support costs

- **Employers**
  - Access to qualified workers
  - Increase productivity
  - Reduce recruitment costs and turnover
  - Shorten new employee orientation times and reduce expenditures
  - Ability to promote from pool of loyal employees

- **Policymakers**
  - Increase impact of funded programs
  - Improve outcomes based on growth of society
Community Engagement Process

- Inventory community, industry, and current workforce development/support structures
- Determine industry sector(s) with greatest needs/opportunities
- Identify key persons within four support legs
- Establish plan of action
- Convene top business leaders (CEOs or plant managers) representing identified sector
Southwestern OK Impact Coalition Project Implementation

Stage 1:
Industry Needs Assessment: Industry Forum

Manufacturing
Healthcare
Energy /Utilities
Simulation / Computer

The Industry Sector Reports will be utilized to create a Career Pathways Development Plan in Stage 2.

Stage 2:
Career Pathways Plan Development Process

Career Pathways Visioning Session:
Participants: Influential senior executive community, industry, and educational leaders (25 to 50)

Education Collaboration Session
Participants: Influential executive level education leaders from K-12 and higher education (20-25 participants)

Community Organization Collaboration Session
Participants: Influential executive level community organization leaders (20-25 participants)

Develop Career Maps
Includes ladders and lattices

Stage 3:
Career Pathways Training Sessions
Career Pathways Action Plan

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Organizing Employers

Rick Stephens, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at the Boeing Company, on what potential employer partners will insist is in place before they commit to involvement:

1. A shared willingness to develop a common language and vocabulary that will enable business, education, and community partners to communicate with one another
Organizing Employers

2. A clear understanding of the motivation of each of the partners
3. Agreement on expected outcomes to ensure alignment and integration of stakeholders’ end product needs
4. Clear evidence that the proposed program will increase worker productivity
Generic Model for Employer Involvement

- ACP programs: developed by colleges, but strongly influenced by local employers
- Single sector focus
- Employer identified skills
- Jointly developed career ladders with points of progress
- College recruiting and screening
- Employment entry following stage 1
Generic Model for Employer Involvement

- Progression from part-time to full-time employment according to the agreed upon ladder/plan
- Recognition and reward for ladder steps
- Employer sector “gentlemen’s agreement”
Significant Industry Sector Involvement

- Participation in program development
- Collaboration with competitors
- Hire part-time students
- Provide mentors
- Provide recognition and/or reward programs
- Provide release time
Danville, IL Project

- WIB-funded planning grant
- Industry sector: Manufacturing
- Focused on student support
- Organizing for fundraising campaign to address student needs
- Implementation phase to follow
Considerations

• What does industry need that these populations can provide?
• What additional services are needed at community and technical colleges to serve these populations?
• What modifications to typical career ladders would need to be considered?
• How does the community or technical college act as a graduate school?
• What models are in place in other communities, at other colleges?
Roundtable Discussion: Organizing Employers
Section 4

Recruitment, Assessment and Career Ladders
Finding Students

- Adults who have already established contact with the education provider or college:
  - Scored poorly on placement tests and require remediation
  - Arrived by “default” and have no career direction or interest
  - First or second term students performing poorly and at risk of dropping out
Finding Students

- Reach adults not associated with education institutions
  - Advertise in the community
  - Meet with civic and faith-based organization leaders
  - Contact urban housing authorities
  - Contact people who applied for jobs with participating employers but weren’t hired
  - Work with corrections agencies
  - Reach out to National Guard Centers
Example Process for Recruiting

**Where do we find ACP candidates?**
- Already on Campus
  - In remediation or developmental courses
  - Unfocused, underperforming
  - At risk of dropping out of college
- Not on Campus
  - The general public
  - Unsuccessful job applicants
  - In community and faith-based organizations
  - Leaving correctional institutions
  - National Guard
  - Early college dropouts

**How do we recruit them for ACP?**
- Intervention

**How do we sort out the potential ACP students?**
- Assessment
  - Entrance exams (academics)
  - Interest and aptitude assessments
  - Personal counseling
  - Financial counseling
  - Learning styles inventory

**How do we prepare them for ACP?**
- Tuition and books
- Personal needs
- Financial needs
- Individual development plan

Figure 6-1. A Process for Recruiting and Selecting ACP Students
Do...

- ...go where adult students are; don’t wait for them to find you
- ...provide a safe place on campus where adult students can gather for advisement
- ...be ready to help any adult student navigate the difficult waters of government programs
Do...

- ...be proactive – look for ways to create win-win situations that improve the quality of local workforce while giving adults the tools to achieve personal success
- ...be creative in finding ways to communicate the ACP concept to special populations
Assessment

- Assess academic levels using traditional tools, selected and prioritized for type of program sought by candidate
  - College placement
  - ESL
- Assess other areas of a candidate’s life to determine program that best fits their needs
  - Individualized tools, career exploration (i.e. Kuder Journey)
  - Career maps
  - Learning style inventories
  - Personal needs; financial situation
- Offer single point of contact to streamline process
Ladder Curriculum

- ACP concept based on student/employee progression through series of steps, like rungs on a ladder
- Curriculum consists of series of educational levels students are expected to attain
- Career-focused program jointly developed by educators and employers
10-stage Ladder Curriculum

Book reference: p. 53
ACP Structural Design

- “Ladder” must be flexible, customized for different settings and contain
  - **Foundational level** – contextual academics, career experiences, and basic work skills
  - **Technical core level** – technical skills within a cluster and work-based learning opportunities
  - **Technical specialty level** – advanced technical skills, advanced academics, and worksite experiences
Benefits

• Students
  ○ Structured, yet flexible
  ○ Attainable short-term goals
  ○ Clear goals and procedures
  ○ Mutual commitment
  ○ Increase opportunities
  ○ Student satisfaction
Benefits

• Employers
  o Greater worker productivity
  o Increased worker retention
  o Increased base of skilled employees
  o Mutual commitment
  o Access to employees with varying skill levels
  o Opportunity to impact curriculum
  o Employer satisfaction
Bridge to Biotech

- City College of San Francisco/BayBio Institute/Bay Area Biotech Education Consortium Partnership
- Working adults returning to pursue careers in biotech
- Many lack basic academic skills, particularly math
- Two-semester lab assistant certificate program (140 units + 180-hour internship) – All courses credit-bearing
- Taught lab techniques while strengthening math/language skills
- Significant industry involvement in program design/internships
Key Steps in Curriculum Design

- Identify appropriate skill standards
- Identify certifications/degrees attainable at ACP stages
- Create sequenced or tiered list of standards
- Select or create courses
- Plan where standards will be covered in courses
- Develop assessment strategies and tools
- Determine logistics for course delivery
- Identify resources to be used
- Plan for continual revisions
Suggested Time Allocations for Prep Stage

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<th>Weeks 1–4</th>
<th>Weeks 5–9</th>
<th>Weeks 10–16</th>
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<td>Academic remediation (in context)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Suggested Time Allocations for Prep Stage

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Automotive Electronics Transformations Bridge Program
Olive-Harvey College, City Colleges of Chicago
Prep Stage Design...

- Improve career focus, self-confidence, and study skills
- Eliminate barriers that hinder admission to the career ladder
- Use contextual teaching strategies to shore up academic deficiencies
- Prepare for employment in a career ladder
Benefits of Contextual Teaching

- Answers the question “Why do I have to learn this?”
- Provides real-world applications for abstract concepts
- Teaches students how to access and analyze information and work in groups to solve problems
- Promotes lifelong learning
REACT Strategy

Contextual Teaching Foundation

Relating
Linking the concept to be learned with something the student already knows.

Experiencing
Hands-on activities and teacher explanation allow students to discover new knowledge.

Applying
Students apply their knowledge to real-world situations.

Cooperating
Students solve problems as a team to reinforce knowledge and develop collaborative skills.

Transferring
Students take what they have learned and apply it to new situations and contexts.
Roundtable Discussion: Recruitment/Assessment/Career Ladders
Section 5

Funding/Student Support
Why a Comprehensive Solution is Needed

- Most intervention strategies provide only a “quick fix” rather than solve the underlying problem.
- Existing efforts are largely uncoordinated with one another.
- Not enough federal and state financial resources available to address magnitude of problem, which is growing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost element</th>
<th>Est. cost</th>
<th>Occurs when?</th>
<th>Services provided by</th>
<th>Source(s) of funds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning, design, training, and development (one-time cost)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Before program begins</td>
<td>College, employers, comm. leaders and consultant</td>
<td>Community Capital Campaign</td>
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<td>Recruitment and intake</td>
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<td>Before Stage 1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Existing college programs and ACP staff</td>
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<td>Counseling and mentoring</td>
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<td>Before Stage 1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Existing college programs and ACP staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>During Stage 1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>During Stage 2</td>
<td>College and employer</td>
<td>Individual employer</td>
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<td>Stages 3–10</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Individual employer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition, teaching materials, and supplies</td>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Federal, state and community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stages 2–10</td>
<td>College and employer</td>
<td>Federal, state and employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/family living costs/Transportation</td>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Combination of tuition assistance programs, community-based organizations and community capital campaign</td>
<td>Federal, state and community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stages 2–3</td>
<td>Combination of student earnings, employer support, community based organizations</td>
<td>Federal, state, community, employer and student</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 4–10</td>
<td>Combination of student earnings, employer support, community based organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Stages 1–10</td>
<td>College and/or community</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid release time to attend classes</td>
<td>Stages 2–10</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Employer</td>
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Figure 9-1. Support Cost Allocations for Average ACP Student-Employee
Problems and Challenges of Existing Funding

- Complex sources of assistance
- Federal and state budget deficits
- Differential WIA implementation
- Glimmers of hope in DOL and ED collaborations
- ACP models being funded — several agencies involved
- Forces local conversations — service provider realignment
State Level Policies to Ensure Success

- Three critical components:
  - Accessibility
  - Affordability
  - Sustainability
State Policy Actions to Ensure Accessibility

1. Set forth a state-specific vision for workforce education in which the private sector plays a key role.
2. Create a state-level partnership in which employers, educators, and policymakers jointly develop a comprehensive framework for ACP.
3. Develop clear, easy-to-understand pathways that enable career-limited adults to progress step-by-step through programs that lead to postsecondary credentials in high-demand fields.
4. Encourage the development of “bridge” programs designed to teach a combination of basic literacy and numeracy, work-readiness skills, and career-specific skills.
State Policy Actions to Ensure Affordability

1. Provide financial aid programs specifically for adults entering ACP programs.

2. Blend resources from existing state and federal funding streams such as WIA, TANF, Carl D. Perkins, and Adult Basic Education, for the purpose of supporting a state-level ACP strategy.

3. Increase financial support for postsecondary education institutions that provide ACP courses and supporting services.

4. Provide higher FTE funding for postsecondary career preparation programs that specifically serve low-income, low-skill adults.
State Policy Actions to Ensure Sustainability

1. Support the development of ACP program performance standards that ensure accountability and reward success.
2. Use Adult Basic Education funds to develop basic skills that meet ACP entrance requirements.
3. Strengthen the governance and accountability of the state’s workforce development system.
4. Connect workforce development programs to the needs of employers.
Three Broad Goals Which Should Appeal to All:

1. ACP programs provide a means to reach out to the less fortunate.
2. ACP programs have the potential to get people out of tax-supported institutions such as welfare and corrections.
3. ACP programs can improve the economic and social well-being of any city or community by improving the skills of its workforce.
Roundtable Discussion:
Funding/Student Support
Wrap-Up/Summary
ACP Program Benefits to States

1. By providing a pipeline of employees who are able to meet the workforce needs of employers
2. By improving the earning power and self-sufficiency of low-income workers
3. By creating an environment in which educators, employers, and public officials are jointly involved in the formulation of state workforce and economic development policy
ACP Program Benefits to States

4. By leading to a more efficient and effective use of publicly allocated workforce development and education resources

5. By creating a mechanism for holding workforce development systems accountable for results

6. By providing a system that enables current and dislocated workers to retrain and retool
Additional Resources

• Career Pathways Planning Checklist
  o P. 47 of *Thriving in Challenging Times*
  o Use to examine your existing partnerships
  o Review the checklist as an activity with stakeholders
  o Create an action plan to address gaps identified
Additional Resources

www.adultcareerpathways.org

Quick reference to:
- Major reports
- Guides/handbooks
- Instructional resources
- National organizations
- Executive Summary of *Adult Career Pathways* book

Presenter Contacts:
Hope Cotner – hcotner@cord.org  Dick Hinckley – hinckley@cord.org
Adult Career Pathways – The Model

There are millions of unemployed and underemployed Americans whose career opportunities are severely limited because of a lack of postsecondary education. At the same time, new and high-growth industries require workers with technical skills and a solid academic foundation. For many of these industries, an associate degree or approved technical certificate is the minimum qualification for employment. A flexible adult education model is essential to prepare unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers for these demanding careers.

In 2007, the Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD) published the book *Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education*. The Adult Career Pathways (ACP) model is an extension of Career Pathways that focuses on adult learners whose educational backgrounds are varied, whose need for support services is considerable, and whose lack of academic preparation for college-level work is often extensive. The ACP model offers a strategy for overcoming workforce barriers by bringing together selected industries, community services, government agencies, and community colleges to identify, enroll, educate, and prepare these adults for high-demand career opportunities. The program specifically targets unemployed, underemployed, and dislocated workers and is ideal for serving individuals with little or no college, returning veterans, foreign-born U.S. residents, and ex-offenders.

Adult Career Pathways programs are designed to address and remove barriers to participation and success. Essential program components include:

- An intensive prep stage designed to prepare participants for job entry and college study
- Industry-focused curriculum that prepares participants for employment and career advancement in designated industries
- A multi-step career ladder that begins with basic job-entry skills and concludes with advanced technical skills
Adult Career Pathways: Providing a Second Chance in Public Education

by Richard Hinckley and Dan Hull

Authors Dick Hinckley and Dan Hull see America at a critical crossroads. They believe that if this country is going to advance out of the current economic crisis, leaders must focus on steps to build labor pools of highly qualified workers and actions to enhance the performance of our incumbent workers. The most successful communities will act proactively to leverage the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Stimulus Bill) and other resources to position themselves to compete in a global economy. Only with collaboration between education, industry, workforce boards, and community organizations will displaced, unemployed, and underemployed workers be efficiently and properly reconnected with the skill sets required to power business and industry’s competitive success.

Prologue

Career-Limited Adults in the Era of High Technology and Globalization

Jesse struggled in school. By the time he was in the fifth grade, it was apparent that he wasn’t “high achieving.” When he entered middle school, things got worse. Math didn’t make sense, he didn’t like his reading assignments, and he had a hard time organizing his writing and “getting started.” By the time he entered the eighth grade, Jesse was starting to question why he was still in school, why he needed to learn things that he would probably never use, and whether there wasn’t something else he could be doing that he would like better than school.

But then things began to improve for Jesse. During the eighth grade Jesse learned about different jobs, discovered his career interests and abilities, and found out that he could choose school subjects that helped him explore and prepare for a future in an interesting career area. Jesse chose to enroll in an IT academy in high school. In the eleventh grade, he switched to an engineering academy. By the time he graduated from high school, he had already earned 12 hours of dual credit through a nearby college, had earned a scholarship, and was well on his way to becoming a photonic engineering technician. Jesse enjoyed the benefits of Career Pathways!

Kara’s experience in school didn’t turn out as well. As with Jesse, her low performance in academic subjects was not matched by her low self-esteem. By the time she reached high school, her mind was somewhere else. Her only goal in school was just to “get out.” She took the easiest path, barely graduating. Although she avoided getting into serious trouble, she left school without a plan and without much preparation for a future. She got a job waiting tables, got married within a year, gave birth to a child, and began to “grow up.” Within a few years, she became a single mother and had to return home to live with her parents, because she didn’t have the resources or support structures to “handle life” on her own.

Kara was 24 years old and without much of a future before her. Yes, she has made some bad choices. But was she also the failure of our public education system? She wanted a second chance at education, a career, and a more rewarding life—and we have a responsibility to help her get it.

These two scenarios reflect the experiences of two large groups of students in U.S. public education. Students in the group represented by Jesse...
Adult Education Resources

**Reports**

**A Cross-Case Analysis of Career Pathway Programs**
National Research Center for Career and Technical Education
University of Minnesota

**Adult Education: Supporting the President’s Workforce and American Graduation Initiatives**
National Council of State Directors of Adult Education

**Moving Beyond the GED: Low-Skilled Adult Transition to Occupational Pathways at Community Colleges Leading to Family-Supporting Careers**
National Research Center for Career and Technical Education
University of Minnesota
[http://136.165.122.102/UserFiles/File/pubs/Moving_beyond_the_GED.pdf](http://136.165.122.102/UserFiles/File/pubs/Moving_beyond_the_GED.pdf)

**Adult Learning in Focus: National State-by-State Data**
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

**A Tale of Two Systems: Linking Economic Development and Workforce Development**
Scardoe Policy Center