



CALIFORNIA BUDGET PROJECT

AT A CROSSROADS

# GATEWAY TO A BETTER FUTURE:

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CREATING A BASIC SKILLS SYSTEM FOR CALIFORNIA

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# California Budget Project

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A college degree or industry-recognized vocational certificate is now the principal pathway to a well-paid job. Increasingly, remedial English and mathematics and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are the gateway to college and skills training. These programs are of increasing importance because many recent high school graduates, high school dropouts, and low-skilled working adults lack the fundamental English and mathematics proficiency required for postsecondary education. Until recent cutbacks, California's basic skills programs – which provide remedial education – served more than 1.5 million students a year at a cost to the state of more than \$1.0 billion.

The California Budget Project (CBP) examined California's basic skills programs in a four-part series called *At a Crossroads*. The *At a Crossroads* series asked four key questions about basic skills education:

- How are basic skills programs organized and governed in California, and who delivers basic skills services?
- How are basic skills programs financed?
- Who do basic skills programs serve?
- What kinds of outcomes do basic skills programs achieve?

Major findings from the *At a Crossroads* series are summarized below.

- **Governance and service delivery.** Two sets of institutions share the primary responsibility for basic skills education: the Adult Education Program, housed in the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California Community Colleges, which offer both credit and noncredit basic skills courses. There is poor coordination both within and across these programs, which can impede students' progress.
- **Financing.** Basic skills programs receive federal, state, and local funding. However, in the February 2009 budget agreement, the Legislature gave school districts the flexibility to use state Adult Education Program funds for other educational purposes; as a result, the Adult Education Program no longer has a dedicated state funding stream.
- **Individuals served.** The Adult Education Program and community college basic skills programs serve a diverse group of students. Students include recent high school graduates with weak English or math skills, high school dropouts, well-educated immigrants whose only barrier

is not knowing English, immigrants barely literate in their own language, young people born in the US who grew up in homes in which English is not the primary spoken language, and – in the case of the Adult Education Program – individuals incarcerated in adult prisons, county jails, or youth facilities. More than half (55.5 percent) of all basic skills students are ESL students, although only about one-quarter of community college basic skills students are ESL students. Basic skills students are predominantly Latino (60.1 percent), with Asians and whites making up similar shares – 17.0 percent and 14.2 percent, respectively.

- **Outcomes achieved.** Although basic skills programs achieve important outcomes for some students, many basic skills students make no progress at all, and some make only minimal progress. An extremely small share successfully enter postsecondary education and attain a certificate or degree or transfer to a four-year college. Basic skills students in the community colleges are less likely to earn an associate's degree or to transfer to a four-year institution than other community college students with the same characteristics; moreover, they take longer than other students to achieve the same goal.

## Creating a Basic Skills System for California: Recommendations

Based on these findings, *At a Crossroads* offers a set of recommendations aimed at integrating California's basic skills programs, improving student outcomes, and providing policymakers the information they need to guide program performance.

### The Goals of a Basic Skills System and the Resources To Support It

California must restore its financial commitment to underprepared students, establish clear goals for what the state's investment is intended to achieve, and implement a coordinated effort to improve occupational and academic outcomes. Specifically:

- California should view its Adult Education Program and community college basic skills programs as components of a common effort and establish goals for the system as a whole, to enable all residents to make the greatest possible contribution to the economic and civic life of the state.
- The specific goals of California's basic skills system should be twofold: To transition increasing numbers of individuals with weak basic skills into postsecondary education or jobs

with opportunities for advancement, and to increase the share of basic skills students who complete a certificate or degree or who transfer to a four-year college or university.

- State adult education resources should follow the priorities of the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which are restricted to basic skills education.
- California should reconfigure the use of existing resources to support these goals and invest in models that bring together multiple funding streams.
- The state should restore dedicated funding for the Adult Education Program and link that funding to a redesign of the program to better support its goals.
- In the face of reduced funding, the Legislature should provide incentives to ensure that the community colleges continue to serve high-need students.

## Governance and Service Delivery

Tighter integration of all basic skills programs is needed to improve effectiveness. Currently, the disjunctures in the basic skills system, both across and within institutions, create costly confusion for students. In the absence of coordination, basic skills students lose time and money, become discouraged, and often drop out. Specifically:

- California must elevate the importance of basic skills and require that the Adult Education Program and the community colleges begin to integrate their programs, either through common governance or through well-coordinated local and regional networks.
- California should pilot the development of “gateway” centers that create partnerships among the Adult Education Program, community colleges, and other stakeholders to prepare and transition basic skills students into postsecondary education or jobs that provide opportunities for advancement and help English-language learners integrate into the economic and civic life of the state.

## Supporting Student Success

Evidence suggests that speeding up the pace of remediation would save time and money for both taxpayers and students and make it more likely that individuals will achieve a meaningful academic or occupational goal. Policymakers should focus both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges on key components of student success, including:

- **Assessment and placement.** California should fully fund and enforce the mandate that each student, whether entering the system through the Adult Education Program or community colleges, receive orientation and assessment upon entry that results in a tailored educational plan outlining an accelerated path to achieving his or her educational goals. Colleges should ensure that basic skills deficiencies are addressed early but, as much as possible, students should begin taking credit “content” courses in their first semester as well. The Adult Education Program should work with the community colleges and the federal government to design and implement an assessment instrument that more effectively measures the skills students need to enter postsecondary education. California should rationalize the assessment process in the community colleges, while recognizing the range of programs offered. New assessment tests in both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges should facilitate the movement of students from one system to the other.
- **Instructional practices.** Both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges should implement more effective instructional practices, including student-centered models, peer group support, accelerated courses, and courses that teach basic skills in the context of occupational skills training.
- **Financial aid policies.** California should develop financial aid policies that better target and support underprepared students.
- **Support services programs.** California should expand programs that provide academic and other support services to underprepared students.
- **Professional development.** The Adult Education Program and the community colleges should partner to provide basic skills instructors with opportunities and incentives for professional development.
- **English as a Second Language.** California’s basic skills system must effectively address the special needs of English-language learners.

## Performance Measures and Accountability

A high-quality accountability system that monitors student success is essential. Equally important is the commitment of lawmakers and policymakers to regularly review and act on the information such a data system provides. Specifically:

- California should implement an accountability framework for all basic skills programs and develop a comprehensive, integrated data system.
- The Legislature should mandate and review an annual report card on the performance of all of California's basic skills programs.
- California should avoid certain dangers in creating accountability systems, particularly those that involve performance metrics and especially performance-based funding schemes, which can have negative and unintended consequences.
- In the context of a redesigned adult education system, California should also reconsider the design of the performance funding system for those programs.

## Conclusion

While there are significant barriers to the reforms proposed by the *At a Crossroads* series, there is serious need for reform. Discussions are underway in the CDE and the California Community Colleges about how to improve basic skills instruction in both systems and coordinate them more effectively. To date, however, the task of reforming basic skills education has not been addressed with sufficient urgency. The conclusions reached by many experts in the past have been largely ignored. Now there is growing clarity based on research, the experience of other states, and innovative California programs about what works and what does not. The critical next step is to overcome institutional and policy inertia and translate these lessons into practice.



# INTRODUCTION

A college degree or industry-recognized vocational certificate is now the principal pathway to a well-paid job. Increasingly, remedial English and mathematics and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are the gateway to college and skills training. These programs are of increasing importance because many recent high school graduates, high school dropouts, and low-skilled working adults lack the fundamental English and mathematics proficiency required for postsecondary education. Until recent budget cuts, California's basic skills programs – which provide remedial education – served more than 1.5 million students a year at a cost to the state of more than \$1.0 billion.

Despite the importance and cost of basic skills education, the California Budget Project's (CBP) *At a Crossroads* study – a four-part series on basic skills education in California – found that many basic skills students do not make significant progress of any kind, few enter postsecondary education or training, and, of those who do, only a small share succeed in achieving a credential, degree, or transfer to a four-year college or university. Other key conclusions that emerged from this research include that:

- California has not established clear priorities and goals for its overall investment in basic skills education.
- The governance structure of basic skills programs is divided between the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Community Colleges. The coordination among basic skills programs both across and within institutions is insufficient and ineffective. Institutional practices impede the transition of students from basic skills courses into postsecondary education and training programs.
- The challenge of funding basic skills education has increased as budget constraints have tightened. Funding formulas for basic skills programs also fail to reflect the real cost of educating underprepared students.
- Few basic skills programs employ the most effective program design and instructional approaches.
- California lacks a comprehensive and integrated data system that permits policymakers to effectively track basic skills students' experiences and outcomes and evaluate where failures are occurring and why.

To address these concerns, this final report of the *At a Crossroads* series reviews the research of the series' earlier

three reports and other research and offers recommendations in five key areas:

- The goals and resources for basic skills education.
- Governance and service delivery.
- Strategies for supporting student success.
- Performance measures and accountability.

In each area, the overarching recommendation is that California's policymakers and administrators must view the CDE's and the California Community Colleges' basic skills programs as a *unified system* and mandate a coordinated effort to serve students and the state as a whole more effectively.

## FINDINGS FROM THE *AT A CROSSROADS* SERIES

Basic skills education has three core content areas: reading and writing, mathematics, and ESL. By all existing measures, the need for basic skills education in California is large. Nearly one-third of California ninth graders drop out before they graduate; more than 4.6 million Californians age 25 or older (19.8 percent) lack a high school degree; and nearly one out of four California adults age 16 or older cannot read an English-language newspaper.<sup>1</sup> California ranks 48 out of 50 states in the share of adults ages 18 to 64 without a high school degree or GED.<sup>2</sup> Estimates place the share of students entering the California Community College system who lack college-level math or literacy skills at more than 80 percent.<sup>3</sup>

Failure to address California's basic skills problem threatens to undermine the state's economic competitiveness and lower residents' standards of living. To help California policymakers address this challenge, the *At a Crossroads* series asked several fundamental questions about basics skills education in California:

- How are basic skills programs organized and governed in California, and who delivers basic skills services?
- How are basic skills programs financed?
- Who do basic skills programs serve?
- What kinds of outcomes do basic skills programs achieve?

The answers to these questions are provided in the first three reports of this series and summarized below.

## How Are Basic Skills Services Organized, Governed, and Delivered?

Two sets of institutions share primary responsibility for basic skills education: the Adult Education Program, housed in the CDE, and the California Community Colleges, which offer both credit and noncredit basic skills courses. The Adult Education Program offers Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and ESL courses, which historically have been delivered through more than 350 adult schools operated by school districts and county offices of education, with classrooms located in more than 1,000 sites, and other providers.<sup>4</sup> The Adult Education Program also offers citizenship preparation, short-term career technical education, services for adults with disabilities, home economics, health and safety, services for older adults, parenting education, and apprenticeship.

In the community college system, most colleges offer remedial English, math, and ESL for entering students who are assessed as not yet ready for college-level work.<sup>5</sup> These classes are usually offered for institutional credit, which may qualify students for financial aid but often do not apply toward degrees, credentials, or transfer. Some colleges also have noncredit divisions that offer basic skills courses. In a small number of cases, community colleges' noncredit divisions are the designated Adult Education Program provider for their community.<sup>6</sup>

Few Adult Education Program courses are focused on transitioning individuals into postsecondary education. Adult Education Program assessment instruments are not designed to provide students with feedback on their college readiness. Students who successfully complete basic skills programs – sometimes lengthy remedial sequences – through the Adult Education Program are often sent for further remediation once they arrive at the community colleges. Even within the community colleges, there is little or no connection between basic skills courses at lower-level noncredit and higher-level credit levels.

The measures used by the Adult Education Program and community colleges to evaluate outcomes are different and their data systems are incompatible. As a result, it is difficult to track the progress of most basic skills students over time and impossible to follow students from the Adult Education Program to the community colleges. In too many cases, it is also difficult to follow students from noncredit to credit programs within the community colleges.

The Adult Education Program and community colleges have different faculty standards and requirements and different institutional cultures. Within the community colleges, there is a

gap between the credit and noncredit divisions, and within the credit division, between basic skills and academic programs.

## How Are Basic Skills Programs Financed?

Basic skills programs receive both state and federal funding. As recently as 2007-08, California spent roughly \$1 billion in state and local funds in addition to the monies it received from the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).<sup>7</sup>

Prior to the February 2009 budget agreement, funding for the Adult Education Program had been allocated to local K-12 school districts based on average daily attendance (ADA). As part of that budget agreement, the Legislature gave school districts the flexibility to shift state Adult Education Program funds to other educational purposes, breaking the link between funding and ADA and eliminating dedicated state funding for the Adult Education Program at least until 2014-15.<sup>8</sup> However, the CDE continues to administer the federal WIA monies which are allocated to providers based on student performance.

The California Community Colleges' basic skills programs are still primarily funded based on attendance. In 2009-10, the community colleges received a total of \$596.7 million in state and local funding for basic skills education, including \$20.0 million in categorical funding as part of the Basic Skills Initiative. These monies were principally for activities to improve basic skills programs, such as curriculum development, professional development for faculty, and counseling. In addition, the community colleges received \$9.8 million in federal WIA monies provided as part of the Adult Education Program.

## Who Do California's Basic Skills Programs Serve?

The data analyzed for the *At a Crossroads* series suggest that there are three types of basic skills students in the community colleges:

- Recent high school graduates who aim to earn a credential or to transfer to a four-year institution but need help with specific skills, including ESL. These are essentially college-level students who do not quite meet college-level standards. More than half of basic skills students fit in this category.
- Adults who have been out of school for a few years and want to earn a vocational certificate or associate's degree or to transfer to a four-year institution but have weak basic skills. One-fifth of basic skills students are in this group.
- Older adults who have significant skill deficits – often, Latino English-language learners – who do not intend to earn a

certificate or degree or to transfer to a four-year institution. More than one-fifth of basic skills students are in this group.

In addition, ESL students tended to be different from other community college basic skills students. ESL students on the whole were older, less likely to have completed high school, and more likely to be Latino. However, a significant share – one-fifth – of ESL students entered the community colleges in college-level courses. These students were as likely to be Asian (39.6 percent) as they were to be Latino (39.6 percent).

Fewer data are available to identify different types of students in the Adult Education Program. Data do show, however, that Adult Education Program students tended to be older than community college students taking courses in the same content area and that Adult Education Program students tended to have lower levels of educational attainment than community college students.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is likely that Adult Education Program students tend to be similar to the second and third basic skills student categories discussed above.

## What Outcomes Do Basic Skills Students Achieve?

Most basic skills students make only minimal progress over a period of several years, many make no progress at all, and very few earn a vocational or academic certificate or degree or transfer to a four-year institution.

### Student Success in the Adult Education Program

Success in the Adult Education Program is measured by test scores that indicate whether students completed one or more “educational functioning levels.” By this measure, ESL students tended to be more successful than Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education students over three years. This analysis found that:

- Just over half (51.0 percent) of ESL students completed at least one of the six ESL levels, although few (12.0 percent) completed two or more.
- More than two out of five Adult Basic Education students (42.3 percent) completed at least one of the four Adult Basic Education levels – approximately the equivalent of two grade levels – but very few (5.5 percent) completed two or more.
- Two out of five Adult Secondary Education students (40.9 percent) completed at least one of the two Adult Secondary Education levels – approximately the equivalent of two grade levels – but very few (4.5 percent) completed two levels.

### Student Success in the Community Colleges

Basic skills students who hoped to complete a vocational or academic certificate or degree or to transfer to a four-year institution – called “credential-seekers” in this report – were relatively unlikely to do so: Just one out of five (19.8 percent) reached one of those milestones. In contrast, one out of four credential-seeking college-level students (25.2 percent) earned a certificate or degree or transferred. Compared to credential-seekers with similar characteristics who did not take any basic skills classes, basic skills students were:

- Slightly less likely to earn a vocational certificate.
- Somewhat less likely to earn an associate’s degree.
- Much less likely to transfer to a four-year institution.

Much larger shares of credential-seeking basic skills students reached other educational milestones. Specifically:

- More than nine out of 10 (92.9 percent) enrolled in at least one college-level course.
- More than two out of three (69.1 percent) earned at least 12 units, and more than one out of three (34.7 percent) earned 30 or more units.
- More than three out of five (63.5 percent) enrolled in college-level English or math.

Basic skills credential-seekers made a substantially greater investment of time and effort to earn credentials or to transfer compared to other students. Specifically:

- Basic skills students required approximately one additional year of school to earn a vocational certificate or associate’s degree, and nearly one and a half additional years to transfer, compared to college-level students.
- Basic skills students took roughly nine more classes than college-level students.
- ESL and Adult Basic/Secondary Education students generally needed more time in school and more classes than Basic Skills English/Math students in order to earn credentials or to transfer.

In addition:

- Few basic skills credential-seekers (8.8 percent) attended school full-time.
- Most basic skills credential-seekers (58.6 percent) waited until after their first school year to take a basic skills class.

Compared to other credential-seekers, basic skills credential-seekers were:

- More likely to undergo orientation and assessment.
- More likely to return for a second term or year.
- Approximately as likely to take classes continuously, rather than “stopping out” and returning to school.

## English-Language Learners’ Success

Most ESL students – particularly those in the Adult Education Program and community college noncredit programs – did not make significant progress. Specifically:

- Slightly more than half (51.0 percent) of Adult Education Program ESL students completed one or more educational functioning levels over three years.
- Only 15.4 percent of community college noncredit ESL students moved into credit ESL during the six-year period covered by the data, and just one-fifth (19.6 percent) took a college-level course. Very few (3.7 percent) earned a certificate or degree or transferred to a four-year institution.

On the other hand, more than two-thirds (67.4 percent) of *credit* ESL students took at least one college-level course, and 13.7 percent earned a certificate or degree or transferred to a four-year institution.

ESL students who started in college-level community college courses were the most successful community college ESL students. These “collegiate” ESL students were as likely to be Asian (39.6 percent) as they were to be Latino (39.6 percent). Nearly one-quarter of collegiate ESL students (23.7 percent) earned a certificate or degree or transferred to a four-year institution.

## What Matters for Student Success?

In the Adult Education Program:

- Asian students were the most likely to complete one or more levels, followed by Latino students, and black students were the least likely to complete a level.
- In general, older students made more progress than younger students.
- Students generally completed more levels when they spent more time in the classroom.
- Nearly all progress was made during students’ first year.

- Students’ progress was similar regardless of whether courses were offered by school districts or by the community colleges that serve as Adult Education Program providers in some communities.

In the community colleges, demographic characteristics played a significant role in basic skills students’ success. Specifically:

- Older basic skills students were slightly more likely than younger students to earn vocational certificates, but less likely to transfer to a four-year institution.
- Asian students were the most likely to earn certificates or associate degrees or to transfer. Black students were the least likely to earn certificates or associate’s degrees, and Latino students were the least likely to transfer to a four-year institution.
- Men were less likely than women to earn a credential or to transfer.

Enrollment patterns and student services also affected basic skills students’ success in the community colleges. Specifically:

- Orientation and assessment services increased the likelihood that basic skills students would earn an associate’s degree or transfer to a four-year institution.
- Basic skills students who took credit basic skills courses in their first year improved their chances of earning an associate’s degree or transferring to a four-year institution.
- Basic skills credential-seekers were generally much more likely to earn certificates or to transfer if they enrolled continuously or full-time or started in college-level courses.

## Student Support Services Can Help More Basic Skills Students Succeed

The research points to specific supports that can enhance basic skills students’ success. These supports include:

- Ensuring that basic skills students receive orientation and assessment services and take the basic skills courses they need without delay.
- Developing courses or programs that help students reach basic skills proficiency more quickly.
- Providing financial aid and other services so basic skills students can enroll full-time until they reach their educational goals. For students who cannot attend full-time for financial or other reasons, other services should be put in place to support and speed academic achievement.

# CREATING A BASIC SKILLS SYSTEM FOR CALIFORNIA: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE *AT A CROSSROADS* SERIES

Based on these findings, this final report of the *At a Crossroads* series offers a set of recommendations centered on four key principles.

## Commitment: The Goals of a Basic Skills System and the Resources to Support It

California must restore its financial commitment to underprepared students, establish clear goals for what the state's investment is intended to achieve, and implement a coordinated effort to improve occupational and academic outcomes.

**California should view its Adult Education Program and community college basic skills programs as components of a common effort and establish goals for the system as a whole, to enable all residents to make the greatest possible contribution to the economic and civic life of the state.** The ultimate objective should be full integration of the Adult Education Program and California Community Colleges' programs. However, bringing together the institutions and programs that deliver basic skills services is a complex effort that will take time. As a first step, California should make basic skills education a clear policy priority and set common goals for the overall system.

States that have developed broad support for improving outcomes of low-skilled residents have enjoyed measurable success. Clear goals allow policymakers to prioritize and target limited resources. Washington state, for example, set a goal to increase the number of underprepared adults with at least one year of postsecondary training.<sup>10</sup> During the past six years, Washington has implemented a set of mutually reinforcing initiatives aimed at achieving that goal. Initiatives include an accelerated program of Adult Basic Education/ESL instruction; a new financial aid program targeting low-income students; development of applied baccalaureates – bachelor's degrees offered by community colleges in occupational fields; and a performance-based funding system that rewards colleges for increasing the rate at which underprepared students meet key educational milestones.<sup>11</sup> Examples from other states include:

- Kentucky, which emphasized improving adult-to-college transitions by setting ambitious goals for the share of GED completers who transition to postsecondary education.<sup>12</sup>
- Oregon, where the Pathways to Advancement Initiative set five central goals, including increasing the number of residents who access postsecondary education and increasing the number who persist and attain degrees or other credentials.<sup>13</sup>
- Minnesota, where the state has begun aligning and integrating adult basic education, noncredit occupational training, and for-credit postsecondary certificate and degree programs.<sup>14</sup>
- Virginia, which has set a goal of increasing by 50 percent the number of students who graduate, transfer to four-year institutions, or complete a workforce credential within the next five years. Virginia's plan includes a commitment to improve the success rates of underprepared and underserved populations by 75 percent.<sup>15</sup>

**The specific goals of California's basic skills system should be twofold: To transition increasing numbers of individuals with weak basic skills into postsecondary education or jobs with opportunities for advancement, and to increase the share of basic skills students who complete a certificate or degree or who transfer to a four-year college or university.** For years, the goals of adult education were to improve literacy, numeracy, and English fluency and support high school dropouts in attaining a high school degree or GED.<sup>16</sup> Performance measures judged programs by the number of students who moved up one literacy or math level. However, with the character of jobs changing, it has become clear that a high school diploma or GED is not sufficient to move into higher-wage jobs and attain economic well-being.<sup>17</sup> Beginning with the passage of the WIA in 1998, federal policy has emphasized workforce preparation and educational outcomes for federally funded adult education programs. Many states took this focus further by establishing goals for transitioning individuals into postsecondary education. California should do the same and also commit to increasing the share of basic skills students who succeed in achieving a certificate, degree, or transfer.

**State adult education resources should follow the priorities of the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which are restricted to basic skills education.** In setting goals, California should narrow the range of services provided with state adult education monies. Currently, school districts in California are permitted to use adult education funds for 10 different program areas. Other than Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and ESL, however, only the Adult Education Program's career technical education

programs serve large numbers of individuals, and only a limited number of communities have robust career technical offerings.

In 2002, the California Joint Committee To Develop a Master Plan for Education identified ESL, Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education, and vocational education as state priorities for both adult education and community college noncredit education.<sup>18</sup> Because community colleges offer vocational education and resources for the Adult Education Program have been cut, that program should target its remaining state funds to basic skills education.

California may wish to allow communities where the Adult Education Program has established large, successful career technical schools broader flexibility with respect to their use of funds. However, those programs should be encouraged to coordinate more closely with the community colleges. Consolidation would make it easier to develop career ladders that connect shorter, entry-level courses to higher-level ones in the same field, to offer Adult Education Program students college credit, and to maximize limited resources.

**California should reconfigure the use of existing resources to support these goals and invest in models that bring together multiple funding streams.** Money alone will not solve the problems with basic skills education identified by the *At a Crossroads* series, but it is almost impossible to run high-quality programs without wisely managed, adequate resources. Multiple federal funding streams can be used to develop comprehensive approaches to educating underprepared students, including the WIA, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, the Carl Perkins Act, and other targeted programs.<sup>19</sup> State resources can also be coordinated to develop more effective programs. In the case of the community colleges, these funding streams include the Basic Skills Initiative monies, the funds for career technical education, and the Economic and Workforce Development Program.

Partnerships such as gateway centers, discussed below, make financial as well as programmatic sense. Other strategies states are pursuing to address the problem of inadequate funding include requesting waivers to be able to use federal monies more flexibly and ensuring that the geographic distribution of funds matches the need for services.<sup>20</sup> Strategies that accelerate student progress, discussed below, should ultimately reduce the cost per student, as each student will take fewer classes to achieve a credential, degree, or transfer to a four-year institution.

**The state should restore dedicated funding for the Adult Education Program and link that funding to a redesign of the program to better support its goals.** In addition to

maximizing the use of existing resources, California should commit to providing adequate funding for basic skills education. The authority for local school districts to use adult education monies for other educational purposes sunsets in 2015.<sup>21</sup> Then, if not before, California should restore adult education monies as a dedicated funding stream and link that restoration to the implementation of a redesigned adult education system that better supports the goals and program models that are most effective in serving basic skills students.<sup>22</sup>

**In the face of reduced funding, the Legislature should provide incentives to ensure that the community colleges continue to serve high-need students.** Despite the fact that they serve many underprepared and thus more costly students, community colleges have experienced reductions in funding. Underprepared students are more likely to be low-income and thus require financial assistance, take longer to complete a course of study, require supplemental instruction, and need a range of other support services.<sup>23</sup> The reimbursement rate for noncredit basic skills courses is also lower than the rate for credit basic skills and college-level courses.

Other states have experimented with ways to financially encourage colleges to enroll and effectively serve underprepared students, including:

- Providing dedicated funding streams for basic skills programs.
- Increasing reimbursement rates for basic skills programs.
- Providing innovation funds to colleges to pilot new models of service delivery.
- Providing dedicated funding for student support services targeted to underprepared students.

In the face of reduced funding, the California Legislature should provide incentives to encourage colleges to continue to serve high-need students. This includes restoring funding for the Basic Skills Initiative to its initial level and focusing these resources on implementing the kinds of strategies highlighted in this report.

## Integration: Governance and Service Delivery

Tighter integration of all basic skills programs is needed to improve effectiveness. Currently, the disjunctures in the basic skills system, both across and within institutions, create costly confusion for students. In the absence of coordination, basic skills students lose time and money, become discouraged, and often drop out.

**California must elevate the importance of basic skills and require that the Adult Education Program and the California Community Colleges begin to integrate their programs, either through common governance or through well-coordinated local and regional networks.**

Findings from the *At a Crossroads* series suggest that the Adult Education Program and community colleges programs need to be restructured to improve student outcomes. This restructuring should be a common project, but many barriers make it difficult for community colleges and the Adult Education Program to coordinate or blend their services. Competition for students can drive a wedge between programs, and federal policies that, for example, make it difficult to use a common assessment tool or match assessment scores can hinder coordination between the community colleges and the Adult Education Program.<sup>24</sup> Other barriers include differences in faculty qualifications, pedagogical approaches, and institutional cultures. The two systems also have different missions and serve somewhat different types of students.

Despite the challenges, states and institutions have been moving to improve coordination, using a number of models. Some states use dual enrollment, in which students can enroll simultaneously in adult education and remedial, academic, or occupational college courses.<sup>25</sup> Dual enrollment allows adult education programs and colleges to share “credit” for students who are dually enrolled and receive funding for the services provided.<sup>26</sup> Approaches that combine adult education with college content courses go one step further and allow students to bypass college remediation, using adult education courses to improve their skills to the level needed for at least certain college-level programs.

Some colleges have begun to merge adult education and credit-level basic skills education at community colleges into a single system, sometimes using dual enrollment to blur programmatic boundaries. Characteristics of these programs include common faculty qualifications, comparable assessment instruments, shared facilities and materials, integrated data systems, comparable budgets, and access to common services for students.<sup>27</sup>

To achieve the goal of a more effectively integrated basic skills system, the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) identified two promising governance models:

- Combining or blending adult education and community college programs into one system within a postsecondary “department” that integrates adult education programs, noncredit community college programs, and degree programs.
- Building a coordinated network between adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce development

through collaboration, alignment, and shared performance goals.<sup>28</sup>

Some states have shifted responsibility for adult education from the K-12 school system to the community colleges, though as of 2004, community colleges were responsible for adult education in only 13 states.<sup>29</sup> Other states have created an overarching agency that oversees both the state adult education agency and the community colleges.<sup>30</sup> The goals of a single governance structure are to provide:

- Common ownership of the entire basic skills system and a single point of accountability for lawmakers and other stakeholders.
- Greater incentive and ease in integrating the various components of that system and improving the transition from basic skills courses into postsecondary education. Such integration may include linking courses, sharing faculty, and a greater ability to develop courses that integrate basic skills and occupational content.
- More efficient use of limited resources, such as sharing space and/or sharing counseling and professional development resources.
- Development of a common culture and vocabulary.
- Less confusion and clearer pathways through the system for basic skills students.

In California, the sheer size of the state and the decentralization of authority within both the community colleges and the Adult Education Program suggest that creating a new overarching governance structure is likely to meet with little success. Integrating governance of all basic skills programs in California – both credit and noncredit programs – would require moving the Adult Education Program into the community college system. In 2002, the Joint Committee To Develop a Master Plan for Education initially recommended this approach, although the final master plan dropped this recommendation.<sup>31</sup> Whatever the reasoning of that commission, there are important questions about the wisdom of moving adult education into the community colleges. Concerns include the facts that:

- In general, community colleges already operating adult education programs have done relatively little to integrate them with the rest of their offerings.
- Because many community colleges have either very small or no noncredit basic skills programs, adding such programs would be difficult when colleges are struggling to meet the mandates of their multiple missions.

- Declining funding for the community colleges makes taking on the underfunded Adult Education Program particularly difficult.

Attempts to consolidate governance of California’s basic skills programs therefore may be risky and could further destabilize programs that are already weakened by a lack of resources. A more realistic first step would be to develop strong networks and linkages between the Adult Education Program and community college programs, as the state of Minnesota is doing.<sup>32</sup> In California, such an effort is likely to vary widely among local areas, depending on the strengths of programs and partnerships already in place. However, it is unlikely that coordination among the Adult Education Program and community college programs would occur statewide without strong legislative incentives and continuing oversight.

**California should pilot the development of “gateway” centers that create partnerships among the Adult Education Program, community colleges, and other stakeholders to prepare and transition basic skills students into postsecondary education or jobs that provide opportunities for advancement, and help English-language learners integrate into the economic and civic life of the state.** “Academic and Career Education Transition Centers,” which are designed to transition adult education students into a job or postsecondary education, are a promising service delivery model currently under consideration by the CDE. The CDE envisions these centers as partnerships with other programs, such as the community colleges and the federally funded One Stop Career Centers.<sup>33</sup>

The “gateway” centers suggested here are based on the CDE’s idea; however, they would be legislatively mandated partnerships between the community colleges and adult education programs to integrate the community colleges’ and Adult Education Program’s basic skills courses. Adult Education Program and community college staff would share responsibility for assessment and instruction and jointly develop program sequences, with the goal of moving students through remediation as quickly and successfully as possible.

Gateway centers would build on work already underway in the community colleges and existing partnerships between adult education programs and community colleges. There would be incentives to engage partners that can bring other funding streams and expertise, such as WIA Title II, TANF, and community-based organizations. It may even be possible to attract philanthropic funding, as demonstrated by the SparkPoint Center at Skyline College in California and the Minnesota FastTRAC programs.<sup>34</sup>

Given the CDE’s interest in this model, the Legislature should provide incentives for some community colleges to join with

the CDE to pilot such gateway centers. Gateway centers should be one component of an overall effort to “fast track” underprepared students to the attainment of postsecondary degrees and certificates.

## Acceleration: Supporting Student Success

Evidence suggests that speeding up the pace of remediation would save time and money for both taxpayers and students and make it more likely that individuals will achieve a meaningful academic or occupational goal.

**Policymakers should focus both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges on key components of student success.** The disappointing results achieved by basic skills students is the most compelling reason to redesign California’s basic skills programs. The *At a Crossroads* series, as well as other studies, has identified weaknesses in the Adult Education Program and community colleges basic skills programs that may explain these outcomes. Problems include how students are assessed and placed into programs, ineffective instructional practices, insufficient attention to professional development for faculty, limited financial aid and support services for students, and insufficient attention to the special needs of ESL students. California policymakers and administrators should focus reform efforts on these specific components of student success.

- **Assessment and placement.** California should fully fund and enforce the mandate that each student, whether entering the system through the Adult Education Program or community colleges, receive orientation and assessment upon entry that results in a tailored educational plan outlining an accelerated path to achieving his or her educational goals. Colleges should ensure that basic skills deficiencies are addressed early but, as much as possible, students should begin taking credit “content” courses in their first semester as well.

To comply with state requirements, community colleges must attempt to assess first-time students and provide them with counseling to develop an educational plan.<sup>35</sup> However, current law specifies that community college assessments are nonbinding. Community colleges are prohibited from requiring students to take remedial classes based on their assessment and, unlike the California State University system, cannot require students to address basic skills deficiencies within a specific time period.<sup>36</sup> Despite community college regulations requiring all students not specifically exempted to receive testing, students routinely opt out of assessment.<sup>37</sup> Many community college students similarly fail to avail themselves of mandated orientation and counseling services.<sup>38</sup>

There is a heated debate both nationally and in California about the best approach to assessment and placement of basic skills students in community colleges so that students can address basic skills barriers early in their college careers. Three recent studies of basic skills programs in the community colleges agree on the benefits of mandatory orientation, assessment, and placement for credit basic skills students and argue that all community college students should be assessed upon entry, with those who need it being required to enter the college's basic skills sequence.<sup>39</sup> However, one rational reason students opt out of assessment and placement is that remediation can be time-consuming and expensive. For some basic skills students, entering a developmental sequence can add an additional year or more of classroom instruction.<sup>40</sup>

There are also disagreements over the validity of assessment tools, given the lack of consensus on what constitutes "college-ready" or how to determine if students are likely to succeed in college-level courses. Existing tests are relatively ineffective in pinpointing the kind of educational intervention students need.<sup>41</sup> ESL assessment instruments are particularly inadequate, resulting in students being placed too high or too low relative to their actual skill level.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the skills needed to succeed in a one-year certificate program differ significantly from those that students need to be able to transfer to four-year institutions.

A further point of concern centers on the quality of remedial courses and the length of time it takes to complete remediation. Researchers at Columbia University's Community College Research Center found that, despite passing individual basic skills classes, remedial students often fail to complete the entire basic skills sequence and therefore never reach a college-level program. In fact, students who did not comply with the requirement that they enter remediation were actually more likely to take and complete college-level classes than those who completed recommended remedial coursework.<sup>43</sup>

One researcher has calculated that out of 100 students beginning coursework at three levels below "college-ready," only 13 would persist through the sequence to go on to pass a college-level course.<sup>44</sup> For students who do not have a high school diploma or GED, particularly those testing many levels below college-ready, the journey to their first college class is very long. As a result, the Columbia study suggests that many basic skills students appear to be more successful when they are "mainstreamed" – that is, when they take college-level courses concurrently with remedial classes. Data from the *At a Crossroads* series support this conclusion.<sup>45</sup>

Rather than require basic skills students to be placed in a lengthy remedial sequence, colleges or gateway centers should be required to develop a comprehensive educational plan that enables each basic skills student to address basic skills deficiencies in their first year of enrollment, while they also begin vocational or academic coursework.

- **Adult Education Program assessment instruments.** The Adult Education Program should work with the community colleges and the federal government to design and implement an assessment instrument that more effectively measures the skills students need to enter postsecondary education.

Within the Adult Education Program, providers must use one of a few federally approved instruments and students must complete pre- and post-tests. In California, assessment is conducted using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), a competency-based system. The CASAS test is designed to measure the literacy skills needed in everyday life and therefore may not effectively measure the skills students need to enter postsecondary education.<sup>46</sup> As California's basic skills programs focus more clearly on transitions, the Adult Education Program must develop assessment instruments that support that effort and work with the federal government to win approval of those tools.

- **Community college assessment instruments.** California should rationalize the assessment process in the community colleges, while recognizing the range of programs offered. New assessment tests in both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges should facilitate the movement of students from one system to the other.

Currently, community college districts may use any assessment instrument approved by the California Community College Board of Governors. A recent study found that there were dozens of such tests, with a few in wide use.<sup>47</sup> In addition, each college sets its own qualifying score on assessment tests. There is considerable interest both in California and nationally in rationalizing the testing process. A growing number of states use a single instrument to test all students entering their public colleges and universities.<sup>48</sup> The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has suggested moving toward this approach. The community college system would be required both to develop a single assessment instrument for incoming first-year students and to place students in appropriate courses. Although community colleges would not be required to use this assessment tool for placement decisions, only colleges using it would be eligible for Basic Skills Initiative funding.

The number and variety of assessment tests used in the community colleges is confusing and frustrating for students, makes it impossible for policymakers to make systemwide comparisons, and increases cost, because students may be retested as they move among institutions.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, a single systemwide assessment instrument could not address the wide range of courses and programs offered by the community colleges that have different entry requirements. One promising approach used in other states is to develop a set of assessment tests, or “pathways,” that are tailored to the requirements of different types of programs.

Any new assessment tests should be sufficiently diagnostic to enable counselors and faculty to target interventions to each student’s basic skills deficiencies.<sup>50</sup> Finally, the testing process should support the movement of students between institutions: from high schools and the Adult Education Program into the community colleges.

- **Instructional practices.** Both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges should implement more effective instructional practices, including student-centered models, peer group support, accelerated courses, and courses that teach basic skills in the context of occupational skills training.

Adult education and community college programs often do not employ the most effective approaches to instruction. Until recently, the pedagogical norm in a great many remedial classes was some version of “skills and drills,” where English and math competencies are broken down into sub-skills and practiced until students become proficient.<sup>51</sup> More recently, consensus has emerged on more “student-centered” models, including content that students clearly view as relevant to their lives and career goals.<sup>52</sup>

Student groupings or “cohorts” that provide peer support also appear to foster student success. Adult education programs have recently moved from open entrance/open exit courses toward the “managed enrollment” model, where a group of students begins and ends a course at the same time, partially because students appear more likely to persist and succeed in classrooms of peers with whom they have established relationships.<sup>53</sup> Community colleges have found that intentional cohort-based models can provide students with crucial forms of peer support.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, there is growing recognition of the importance of instructional intensity. In ESL programs, it is clear that the more intensive the program, the shorter the time required to learn English.<sup>55</sup> This process is often true in other basic skills courses as well, leading at least one state to reduce the number of students served in favor of increasing hours

of service per student to nearly double the national average.<sup>56</sup> Acceleration strategies include developing assessment tests that more accurately identify each student’s specific skills gap and then addressing those gaps through tutoring and supplemental instruction, “mainstreaming” students who require only relatively limited remediation; combining several levels of remediation into intensive, accelerated courses to reduce or eliminate dropping out; and allowing lower-level basic skills students to enroll in occupational certificate programs that do not require college-level English and math as an intermediate step toward a degree, and/or developing “bridge” programs that prepare students for entrance into occupational training programs by teaching basic skills in a vocational context.<sup>57</sup>

Acceleration appears successful even for students who enter with low skill levels.<sup>58</sup> At Chabot College, a majority of students now choose a one-semester accelerated English course. After four years, the program’s pass rates are double those of students who select the traditional English remediation sequence and almost triple the rate – 36 percent compared to 13 percent – among black students.<sup>59</sup> The Accelerated Learning Project at the Community College of Baltimore County, which offers a similar model, has found that students complete at twice the rate as in the traditional sequence, in about half the time.<sup>60</sup>

Some accelerated models facilitate the transition to the student’s next academic or career goal by incorporating relevant content.<sup>61</sup> Washington state’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST) offers one of the most extensive efforts to implement “contextualized” basic skills education. I-BEST pairs adult basic skills instructors, including ESL instructors, in classrooms with occupational instructors. Carefully tracked outcomes indicate that I-BEST students earned five times more college credits on average and were 15 times more likely to complete workforce training than a control group of students during the same amount of time.<sup>62</sup>

The need for acceleration may be among the most compelling arguments for greater integration of the Adult Education Program and community college basic skills programs so as to reduce the number of basic skills courses required of students moving from one program to the other.

- **Financial aid policies.** California should develop financial aid policies that better target and support underprepared students.

One of the most important barriers for basic skills students is the number of hours they must work to support themselves. Financial aid is among these students’ most critical needs. The *At a Crossroads* data and many other studies find that students who attend school full-time are more likely to complete

their program than those who attend part-time; therefore, financial aid programs that allow students to work fewer hours can improve student outcomes.<sup>63</sup> However, federal financial aid – such as the Pell Grant – focuses largely on traditional students aged 18 to 22 who attend college within one or two years of graduating from high school. Working adults age 24 or older who enroll in school are treated as independent for purposes of financial aid, which limits eligibility even in the case of very low-income students.<sup>64</sup>

Some states have created financial aid programs that allow students to be enrolled less than half-time and that are not merit-based.<sup>65</sup> The most useful of these programs cover tuition, living expenses, book allowances, and other student needs; some, such as Washington state’s Opportunity Grant Program, even provide support to colleges for the counseling and other services basic skills students need.<sup>66</sup>

Some adult education programs provide access to federal financial aid, such as the Pell Grant Program, and some offer grants and scholarships from local philanthropic sources. However, there is no statewide financial aid system for Adult Education Program students – another reason for the adult education and community college programs to collaborate to move students as rapidly as possible into credit basic skills programs that do qualify them for financial aid.

At the community college level, a greater share of Cal Grant funding should help low-income students meet living expenses such as room, board, textbooks, and transportation, which typically represent 95 percent of the total cost for community college students.<sup>67</sup> The Cal Grant program should expand its focus to include the large population of community college students who return to school after working for more than a year. In addition, Cal Grant rules should permit remediation courses that count toward Cal Grant eligibility not to reduce the two- or four-year limit on assistance.

- **Support services programs.** California should expand programs that provide academic and other support services to underprepared students.

The needs of basic skills students for such services as childcare, transportation, counseling, tutoring, and mentoring can also stand in the way of academic success. In the Adult Education Program, counseling, childcare, and transportation assistance are allowable uses of federal WIA monies; however, as core educational services have been substantially cut back, providers lack resources for support services.

The community colleges provide limited support services for students. Some services, such as student counseling offices,

are open to all students; other programs are targeted to low-income and underprepared students, such as the federal Student Support Services Program and the state’s Extended Opportunity Program and Services. Historically, these services and programs served only a small fraction of the students who needed them, and their resources have been threatened and reduced as budget constraints have tightened. All three recent reviews of basic skills education in the California community colleges recommend increasing the availability of support services.<sup>68</sup>

In both the adult education and community college programs, partnerships with other organizations can help expand support services in the face of tighter budgets. Lawmakers must also be committed to protecting and, where possible, expanding these resources.

- **Professional development.** The Adult Education Program and the community colleges should partner to provide basic skills instructors with opportunities and incentives for professional development.

The California Community College Research and Planning Group’s recent assessment of basic skills programming suggested that lack of awareness by faculty is a major reason for the dearth of more effective instructional practices. According to the study, “the importance of comprehensive training and development opportunities for faculty and staff who work with developmental students cannot be overestimated.”<sup>69</sup> The challenge of providing professional development is complicated by the fact that in both the Adult Education Program and community college systems most basic skills faculty teach part-time.

Both the Adult Education Program and the community colleges engage in professional development activities, but funding for teacher training is limited. The Basic Skills Initiative provides resources to support professional development of community college basic skills faculty and the CDE uses a portion of its federal monies for this purpose. Combining these and other professional development resources available in both systems would maximize resources and bring the two systems together at the level of service delivery where the concrete work of coordination needs to occur.

- **English as a Second Language.** California’s basic skills system must effectively address the special needs of English-language learners.

ESL students make up more than half of basic skills students in California. The Adult Education Program serves more than two-thirds (68.1 percent) of these students.<sup>70</sup> Many ESL students have very limited language ability: In

the Adult Education Program, more than one-third enter at beginning ESL levels, and most community college ESL students enter at the lowest ESL levels.<sup>71</sup> ESL students tend to be much older than other basic skills students, and the majority are Latino. Most ESL students begin in noncredit programs. Few make significant progress in their English literacy skills, and even fewer make the transition to postsecondary education or training.

ESL students who are successful in reaching postsecondary programs appear to achieve success equal or greater to other students as measured by grade point averages, the percentage of courses passed, and the number of degrees and credentials earned. In a study by City College of San Francisco that followed noncredit ESL students over seven years, researchers found that 25 percent of those students who transitioned into credit courses obtained degrees or a certificate – three times the rate of all students. Credit ESL students, as a whole, attained nearly one-third of the certificates and half the degrees awarded to students, while students who had transitioned from noncredit ESL were less likely to transfer to a four-year institution.<sup>72</sup> The *At a Crossroads* series found that noncredit ESL students who were actively pursuing a degree, credential, or transfer were more likely than community college students overall to achieve a degree or credential, though somewhat less likely to transfer to a four-year institution.

Acceleration strategies are particularly critical for ESL students, who often cannot transition into college courses until they have reached intermediate or higher levels of ESL, a process that can take more than two years. Hours of instruction are strongly correlated with advancement, but higher intensity courses also must allow students to transition as quickly as possible from one level to another.<sup>73</sup>

Not all ESL students want to transfer to postsecondary education or training.<sup>74</sup> Yet, as other studies note, it is difficult to determine the cause or extent of low aspirations. A summary of research by the CAAL argues that:

“ESL programs rarely provide extensive guidance, counseling, and coaching services that can help students navigate the instructional process, encourage them to establish more ambitious goals, and show them how those goals can be realistically achieved if they persist in their studies.”<sup>75</sup>

ESL students represent a large and important share of California’s underprepared students. To meet its need for a skilled workforce, the state should commit to moving many more English-language learners to intermediate

or higher levels of ESL through strategies that include greater access to counseling, improved assessment, high-intensity instruction, accelerated programs that place a strong emphasis on college readiness, contextualization of ESL instruction, professionalization of faculty, and supportive services. More research that focuses on better understanding of who ESL students are, along with their aspirations and needs, is a critical underpinning of this effort.

## Accountability: Performance Measures and Accountability

A high-quality accountability system that monitors student success is essential. Equally important is the commitment of lawmakers and policymakers to regularly review and act on the information such a data system provides.

**California should implement an accountability framework for all basic skills programs and develop a comprehensive, integrated data system.** Responsible policymaking requires good data. California lags considerably behind many other states in its ability to gather and analyze data across education and workforce programs. The Adult Education Program and the community college system use different performance measures and have different cultures of accountability. Until recently, neither published data that tracked the outcomes of individual basic skills students over time. In the Adult Education Program, it is extremely difficult to track students across successive years and programs and impossible to track students who transfer from the Adult Education Program into the community colleges. The community college system has begun to publish data on basic skills students, but, although it is possible for the system to follow students for whom they have Social Security numbers into the labor market, this is not done routinely.

The Adult Education Program accountability system, mandated for WIA Title II recipients by the federal government, measures student progress in completing 11 literacy levels within the program areas of Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and ESL.<sup>76</sup> Progress is measured by the share of participants who complete a literacy level within a single program year. Since almost all adult education programs are open-enrollment/open-exit, students counted in any one year could have been in the program for as long as 12 months – or more – or as little as a few weeks. The data collected for the federal government offer only a snapshot of the Adult Education Program for a program year; students are not tracked across program years and/or from one school or program to another. Follow-up data, gathered through a survey that has a low response rate, are reported only on the share of

students who identify one of four specific goals and achieve them: getting a job, retaining a job, entering postsecondary education or training, and attaining a GED or high school diploma.<sup>77</sup>

Rather than use Social Security numbers to track students, each Adult Education Program agency assigns a student identification number to adult learners at the time of enrollment. A statewide system that assigns unique identifiers would enable Adult Education Program students to be tracked across Adult Education programs. The lack of a common unique student identifier also makes it impossible to follow individuals from the Adult Education Program into the community colleges.

The community college reporting system is more comprehensive. Beginning in 2007, the community colleges implemented an annual report called Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARRC). ARRC focuses almost exclusively on credit students and provides an overview of student demographics and outcomes. In 2009, the Chancellor's office issued an annual companion Basic Skills Accountability report.

There is now a national movement to improve data reporting and accountability systems for educational and workforce programs.<sup>78</sup> Many states have concluded that the elements of an effective data system include:

- Student-level unit records that track student performance across years and institutions.
- Demographic and program enrollment data.
- College placement test scores and secondary school academic information.
- The ability to share student-level information among the K-12, community college, and higher education data systems.
- The ability to link to other key state databases, particularly state Unemployment Insurance and adult basic education data.<sup>79</sup>

Recently, a California working group mandated by AB 1319 (Liu, Chapter 264 of 2006) recommended steps toward the development of an integrated, longitudinal system for the Adult Education Program and the community college system. The Legislature should reconvene an expanded version of the working group and require it to develop a plan for a data system that can track students across institutions and programs and into the labor market. The National Governors' Association has provided guidance on the subject, and there is a national Data Quality Campaign that provides information

and resources. Both the US Department of Labor and the US Department of Education have been providing support to states to upgrade their data systems. The group should explore the availability of support for this effort.

**The Legislature should mandate and review an annual report card on the performance of all of California's basic skills programs.** A single, simple annual "report card" on basic skills programs and the experiences of underprepared students in California would provide lawmakers, other policymakers, administrators, and other stakeholders with a common and consistent source of information.<sup>80</sup>

**California should avoid certain dangers in creating accountability systems, particularly those that involve performance metrics and especially performance-based funding schemes, which can have negative and unintended consequences.** Despite the importance of a sophisticated performance accountability system there are also real dangers, including:

- **One size doesn't fit all.** The Adult Education Program and the community colleges serve multiple populations through their basic skills programs, and the community colleges have a much wider set of missions than remediation. Outcome measures that are appropriate for one set of students may be inappropriate for another.
- **Unintended consequences.** One-size-fits-all outcome measures can encourage, for example, "creaming" of only the most qualified students or lowering academic standards – both in order to increase graduation rates.<sup>81</sup> Performance measures that are not carefully designed can end up causing programs to turn away the highest-need students.
- **High compliance costs.** The value of data systems must outweigh the cost of data collection, and institutions must be adequately compensated for these costs.

Performance accountability systems should be carefully crafted, with particular concern for pay-for-performance approaches.

Recently, both the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy and the LAO have argued for performance-based funding for the community colleges. However, while one study of performance accountability systems in nine states concluded that states with pay-for-performance systems in their community colleges saw some improvement, it was unclear if they outperformed states without performance-based systems. The same study found evidence that performance-based systems generated unintended negative outcomes, perhaps because these systems were relatively new and needed to be refined in order to be effective.<sup>82</sup> Washington state's

new “momentum point” system, which is aimed at improving outcomes for underprepared students, has been designed to avoid many of the problems of earlier attempts at linking financial rewards to performance in community college settings.

California could experiment with different approaches to performance-based funding by developing some pilot initiatives and collecting data on the strengths and weaknesses of each. However, any such effort should be secondary to the urgent task of developing and implementing a comprehensive, integrated data system.

**In the context of a redesigned adult education system, California should also reconsider the design of the performance funding system for those programs.** California may wish to reevaluate the basis on which incentive funds are distributed to the Adult Education Program providers as federal monies become a larger share of total Adult Education Program funding and as the Adult Education Program begins to focus more sharply on the goals of transition to postsecondary education and employment.

## CONCLUSION

Despite undeniable barriers to the reforms proposed by the *At a Crossroads* series, there is a serious need for reform. Discussions are currently underway among the CDE, the California Community College system, the Legislature, and other stakeholders about how to improve basic skills instruction in both systems and coordinate them more effectively. The recommendations offered in this paper reflect the thinking of some, if not all, of these participants. The CDE’s new strategic plan includes many of these recommendations as well.<sup>83</sup>

To date, however, the task of reforming basic skills education has not been addressed with sufficient urgency in California. The conclusions reached by many experts in the past have been largely ignored. Now there is growing clarity from research, the experience of other states, and innovative California programs about what works: institutions and programs that are integrated; policies and pedagogies that accelerate students’ ability to address their basic skills barriers and attain a certificate or degree or to transfer to a four-year institution; and state policymakers who are committed to the importance of basic skills education and put in place comprehensive data systems that provide stakeholders at all levels with the information they need to serve students effectively. The critical next step is to overcome institutional and policy inertia and translate these lessons into practice.

# ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> California Budget Project, *At a Crossroads: Basic Skills Education in California* (October 2009), p. 5.
- <sup>2</sup> In California, 18.5 percent of adults 18 to 64 lack a high school degree or GED compared to 13.7 percent of US adults overall. The Working Poor Families Project State Data Snapshot, downloaded from <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/indicators.html#> on November 28, 2010. The GED (General Educational Development) is a battery of five tests that measure the skills considered to be the major outcomes of a high school education.
- <sup>3</sup> California Budget Project, *At a Crossroads: Basic Skills Education in California* (October 2009), p. 4.
- <sup>4</sup> Adult Basic Education is the equivalent of grades 0 to 8, and Adult Secondary Education is the equivalent of high school-level learning.
- <sup>5</sup> California Budget Project, *At a Crossroads: Basic Skills Education in California* (October 2009), p. 6. Since most students who enter community colleges lack sufficient reading, writing, and math skills to do college-level work, one of the community college system's core missions is to provide pre-collegiate basic skills instruction to these students. The community college system defines basic skills as "those foundation skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language, as well as learning skills and study skills, which are necessary for students to succeed in college-level work." See the Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges* (July 2007), p. 13. Colleges vary widely in the range of basic skills courses they offer. See California Budget Project, *At a Crossroads: Basic Skills Education in California* (October 2009), p. 6.
- <sup>6</sup> Seventeen community colleges are part of the Adult Education Program service delivery network and receive federal WIA Title II funds. In two regions – San Francisco and San Diego – the community college district, rather than the K-12 school district, is the designated Adult Education Program provider.
- <sup>7</sup> In 2007-08, California received \$66.0 million from WIA. California Budget Project, *At a Crossroads: Financing Basic Skills Education in California* (April 2010), p.3.
- <sup>8</sup> The February 2009 budget agreement allowed school districts to use funds from roughly 40 categorical programs, including the Adult Education Program, for any purpose. Each district now receives the same share of total state Adult Education Program funding as it received in 2007-08. The authority to use adult education funding for other purposes was extended to 2015 by SB 70 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 7 of 2011).
- <sup>9</sup> Data on the educational achievement of Adult Education Program students are from CASAS, *California Adult Education Student Progress and Goal Attainment Report: Adult School Programs in California: Program Year 2006 July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006* (prepared for the California Department of Education: no date), p. 8.
- <sup>10</sup> Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, *High Skills, High Wages, 2008-2018: Washington's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development* (2009), p. 47.
- <sup>11</sup> Bridges to Opportunity Initiative, *Bridges to Opportunity for Underprepared Adults: A State Policy Guide for Community College Leaders* (2008), p. 22.
- <sup>12</sup> Amy-Ellen Duke and Julie Strawn, *Overcoming Obstacles, Optimizing Opportunities: State Policies To Increase Postsecondary Attainment for Low-Skilled Adults* (Jobs for the Future: March 2008), p. 5.
- <sup>13</sup> Amy-Ellen Duke and Julie Strawn, *Overcoming Obstacles, Optimizing Opportunities: State Policies To Increase Postsecondary Attainment for Low-Skilled Adults* (Jobs for the Future: March 2008), p. 4.
- <sup>14</sup> Julie Strawn, *Shifting Gears: State Innovation To Advance Workers and the Economy in the Midwest* (The Joyce Foundation: July 2010), p.11.
- <sup>15</sup> Jobs for the Future, *Good Data, Strong Commitment, Better Policy, Improved Outcomes* (no date), p. 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Julie Strawn, *Policies To Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment* (prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy: revised October 18, 2007), p. 1.
- <sup>17</sup> James J. Heckman, John Eric Humphries, and Nicholas S. Mader, *The GED* (National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 16064: June 2010).
- <sup>18</sup> Joint Committee To Develop a Master Plan for Education, *The California Master Plan for Education* (September 2002), p. 103.
- <sup>19</sup> Amy-Ellen Duke, *Increasing Resources for Adult Education*, presentation at the Working Poor Families Project Meeting, State Policy Academy on Adult Education (Center for Law and Social Policy: June 2007).
- <sup>20</sup> Amy-Ellen Duke, *Increasing Resources for Adult Education*, presentation at the Working Poor Families Project Meeting, State Policy Academy on Adult Education (Center for Law and Social Policy: June 2007).
- <sup>21</sup> The authority to use adult education funding for other purposes was extended to 2015 by SB 70 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 7 of 2011).
- <sup>22</sup> The California Department of Education's new strategic plan for the Adult Education Program also proposes to redesign the distribution formula for the funding that has a needs-based as well as a performance-based component. See California Department of Education, *Linking Adults to Opportunity: A Blueprint for the Transformation of the California Department of Education Adult Education Program*, Working Draft (October 13, 2010), pp. 37-40.
- <sup>23</sup> Amy-Ellen Duke and Julie Strawn, *Overcoming Obstacles, Optimizing Opportunities: State Policies To Increase Postsecondary Attainment for Low-Skilled Adults* (Jobs for the Future: March 2008), p. 5.
- <sup>24</sup> For example, the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, which administers the federal funding for adult education, would not allow Kentucky to make use of correspondence tables between Adult Education Program and college assessment tests, which would have allowed students to take only one test instead of both. Gloria Cross Mwase, *Better Together: Realigning Pre-College Skills Development Programs To Achieve Greater Academic Success for Adult Learners* (Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education: November 2008), p. 9. See also Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, *To Ensure America's Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults – Strengthening Links Between Adult Education and Community Colleges* (February 2005), p. 19.
- <sup>25</sup> Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, *To Ensure America's Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults – Strengthening Links Between Adult Education and Community Colleges* (February 2005), p. 54.
- <sup>26</sup> Colleges in Oregon, which permits dual enrollment, have used this approach to create a flexible, self-paced program for lower-level basic skills students who were previously struggling in remedial education courses. Gloria Cross Mwase, *Better Together: Realigning Pre-College Skills Development Programs To Achieve Greater Academic Success for Adult Learners* (Jobs for the Future and the National Council for Workforce Education: November 2008), p. 23.
- <sup>27</sup> Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, *To Ensure America's Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults – Strengthening Links Between Adult Education and Community Colleges* (February 2005), p. 55.
- <sup>28</sup> Cynthia Zafft, Silja Kallenbach, and Jessica Spohn, *Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models* (National College Transition Network: December 2006), p. 10.
- <sup>29</sup> Vanessa Smith Morest, *The Role of Community Colleges in State Adult Education Systems: A National Analysis* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: April 2004), p. 10.
- <sup>30</sup> In Kentucky, for example, responsibility for all basic skills programs was assigned to the Council on Postsecondary Education. In North Carolina and Oregon, authority for adult education was invested in agencies overseeing the community colleges. See Gloria Cross Mwase, *Better Together: Realigning Pre-College Skills Development Programs To Achieve Greater Academic Success for Adult Learners* (Jobs for the Future: November 2008), p. 7.
- <sup>31</sup> California Department of Education, *Meeting the Challenge: A History of Adult Education in California: From the Beginnings to the Twenty-First Century* (2005), p. 115.
- <sup>32</sup> Governor's Workforce Development Council, *Strengthening the Skills of Our Current Workforce: Recommendations for Increasing Credential Attainment Among Adults in Minnesota* (September 2010), pp. 3-4.
- <sup>33</sup> California Department of Education, *Linking Adults to Opportunity: A Blueprint for the Transformation of the California Department of Education Adult Education Program*, Working Draft (October 13, 2010), pp. 20-26.
- <sup>34</sup> Skyline's SparkPoint Center provides a variety of basic skills and supportive services and is funded by both public and philanthropic monies.

- <sup>35</sup> The California Community Colleges are mandated by what are called “matriculation” regulations to attempt to assess incoming first-year students and provide them with orientation and counseling services. The components of matriculation include application for admission, assessment, orientation, counseling, development of an educational plan, evaluation of student progress, support services, and specialized curriculum such as basic skills and ESL courses. See The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, *Issues in Basic Skills Assessment and Placement in the California Community Colleges* (Fall 2004), p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> Legislative Analyst’s Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (June 2008), p. 10.
- <sup>37</sup> For example, in the fall of 2006, approximately 10 percent of students directed to assessment failed to attend. See Legislative Analyst’s Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (June 2008), p. 10.
- <sup>38</sup> In the fall of 2006, about one-quarter of students directed to orientation failed to show up and more than half of the students directed to counseling never received that service. See Legislative Analyst’s Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (June 2008), p. 11.
- <sup>39</sup> The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), p. 23; Legislative Analyst’s Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (June 2008), pp. 13-16; and Colleen Moore, et al., *Beyond the Open Door: Increasing Student Success in the California Community Colleges* (California State University, Sacramento Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy: August 2007), pp. 39-40.
- <sup>40</sup> See California Budget Project, *Student Success in California’s Basic Skills System* (April 2011) and Thomas Bailey, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho, “Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges,” *Economics of Education Review* 29 (2010), p. 267.
- <sup>41</sup> Thomas Bailey, *Rethinking Developmental Education in Community College* (Community College Research Center: February 2009), p. 1.
- <sup>42</sup> Forrest P. Chisman and JoAnn Crandall, *Passing the Torch: Strategies for Innovation in Community College ESL* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: February 26, 2007), pp. 43-47.
- <sup>43</sup> In their study, nearly three-quarters of students who skipped the remedial sequence and entered college-level courses directly passed those courses, while only slightly more than one out of four of those who complied with their referral to the basic skills sequence completed a college-level course. Thomas Bailey, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho, “Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges,” *Economics of Education Review* 29 (2010), p. 261.
- <sup>44</sup> Katie Hern, *Exponential Attrition and the Promise of Acceleration in Developmental English and Math* (Chabot College: June 2010), p. 2.
- <sup>45</sup> Credential-seeking basic skills students who took college-level courses in their first term were more likely to earn a credential or to transfer than other students with similar characteristics.
- <sup>46</sup> Daryl F. Mellard and Gretchen Anderson, *Challenges in Assessing for Postsecondary Readiness* (prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy: December 2007), p. 6.
- <sup>47</sup> Legislative Analyst’s Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (June 2008), p. 10; Colleen Moore, et al., *Beyond the Open Door: Increasing Student Success in the California Community Colleges* (California State University, Sacramento Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy: August 2007), p. 29; and Andrea Venezia, Kathy Reeves Bracco, and Thad Nodine, *One-Shot Deal? Students’ Perceptions of Assessment and Course Placement in California’s Community Colleges* (WestEd: 2010), p. 3.
- <sup>48</sup> Victoria P. Morrow, *Basic Skills: A Report* (Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges: September 9-10, 2002), p. 5.
- <sup>49</sup> Andrea Venezia, Kathy Reeves Bracco, and Thad Nodine, *One-Shot Deal? Students’ Perceptions of Assessment and Course Placement in California’s Community Colleges* (WestEd: 2010), p. 3.
- <sup>50</sup> Andrea Venezia, Kathy Reeves Bracco, and Thad Nodine, *One-Shot Deal? Students’ Perceptions of Assessment and Course Placement in California’s Community Colleges* (WestEd: 2010), p. 22.
- <sup>51</sup> W. Norton Grubb and Judy Kalman, “Relearning To Earn: The Role of Remediation in Vocational Education and Job Training,” *American Journal of Education* 103 (November 1994), p. 71.
- <sup>52</sup> The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), pp. 47-48 and 54-58.
- <sup>53</sup> The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), pp. 51 and 56-58.
- <sup>54</sup> According to a report by the Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group of the California Community Colleges, learning communities can occur within a course or link together a set of courses. The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), pp. 58-59.
- <sup>55</sup> JoAnn Crandall and Ken Sheppard, *Adult ESL and the Community College* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, Working Paper 7: December 13, 2004), p. 16.
- <sup>56</sup> Martin Liebowitz, *Adult Education and Literacy in Community Colleges in Massachusetts: A Case Study for the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: March 2004), pp. 14-15.
- <sup>57</sup> Davis Jenkins, Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Josipa Roksa, *Promoting Gatekeeper Course Success Among Community College Students Needing Remediation: Findings and Recommendations From a Virginia Study – Summary Report* (November 2009), pp. 14-15; Katie Hern, *Exponential Attrition and the Promise of Acceleration in Developmental English and Math* (Chabot College: June 2010); and Thomas Bailey, *Rethinking Developmental Education in Community College* (Community College Research Center Brief: February 2009), p. 3.
- <sup>58</sup> Katie Hern, *Exponential Attrition and the Promise of Acceleration in Developmental English and Math* (Chabot College: June 2010), pp. 7 and 13.
- <sup>59</sup> Katie Hern, *Exponential Attrition and the Promise of Acceleration in Developmental English and Math* (Chabot College: June 2010), p. 5.
- <sup>60</sup> Katie Hern, *Exponential Attrition and the Promise of Acceleration in Developmental English and Math* (Chabot College: June 2010), p. 13.
- <sup>61</sup> These models include approaches such as the GED-Plus, which bolsters the GED curriculum with academic content and/or other skills that students need to be successful in a postsecondary setting; accelerated ESL models that provide intensive reading and writing development, study skills, and an introduction to postsecondary education; and programs that provide access to vocational training by teaching both basic skills and technical skills contextualized to an industry sector and/or occupation.
- <sup>62</sup> The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), pp. 57-58.
- <sup>63</sup> Colleen Moore, Nancy Shullock, and Jeremy Offenstein, *Steps to Success: Analyzing Milestone Achievement To Improve Community College Student Outcomes* (California State University, Sacramento Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy: October 2009), p. 9.
- <sup>64</sup> Julie Strawn, *Policies To Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment* (prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy: September 28, 2007), p. 7 and Sara Goldrick-Rab, “Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Community College Student Success,” *Review of Educational Research* 80 (September 2010), p. 444.
- <sup>65</sup> Derek V. Price and Brandon Roberts, *Strengthening State Financial Aid Policies for Low-Income Working Adults* (The Working Poor Families Project Policy Brief: Fall 2007), p. 3.
- <sup>66</sup> See the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges website at <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu>.
- <sup>67</sup> Data apply to full-year, full-time enrollment for a California resident living off campus. See “How Much Does College Cost?” at <http://www.californiacolleges.edu/finance/how-much-does-college-cost.asp> and California Budget Project, *Working Hard, Falling Short: Investing in California’s Working Families* (January 2005), p. 24.
- <sup>68</sup> The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), p. 28; Legislative Analyst’s Office, *Back to Basics: Improving College Readiness of Community College Students* (June, 2008), p. 16; and Colleen Moore, et al., *Beyond the Open Door: Increasing Student Success in the California Community Colleges* (California State University, Sacramento Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy: August 2007), p. 40.

- <sup>69</sup> The Center for Student Success and the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California* (July 2007), p. 30.
- <sup>70</sup> Virtually all Adult Education Programs offer ESL, and most community colleges offer credit ESL; however, only about half the community colleges offer noncredit ESL, and most of those students are concentrated in a handful of schools, including San Francisco City College, the San Diego Community College District, and the North Orange Community College District. Dona Boatright, *Noncredit Instruction: A Portal to the Future* (presentation to the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges: January 11-12, 2005), p. 11.
- <sup>71</sup> See, for example, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, *Basic Skills Accountability Report 2009* (September 1, 2009), p. 12.
- <sup>72</sup> Steven Spurling, Sharon Seymour, and Forrest P. Chisman, *Pathways and Outcomes: Tracking ESL Student Performance: A Longitudinal Study of Adult ESL Service at City College of San Francisco* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: January 7, 2008), pp. 123-124.
- <sup>73</sup> Instead, for example, most City College of San Francisco noncredit ESL courses promote students only after one term – 175 hours of instruction – while it typically takes students only 100 hours or less to advance one level. Steven Spurling, Sharon Seymour, and Forrest P. Chisman, *Pathways and Outcomes: Tracking ESL Student Performance: A Longitudinal Study of Adult ESL Service at City College of San Francisco* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: January 7, 2008), p. 98. The California Budget Project's *At a Crossroads* data also show that roughly 75 percent of Adult Education Program ESL students are in the program for one year or less – another reason to accelerate learning.
- <sup>74</sup> In the *At a Crossroads* cohort, only 17 percent of noncredit ESL students who did not also take a college-level course in their first term appeared to seek a credential, degree, or transfer; this compares with the 91 percent of ESL students who began at the college level. Students under 35 are more likely to transition into college courses.
- <sup>75</sup> Forrest P. Chisman, *Findings in ESL: A Quick Reference to Findings of CAAL Research on ESL Programs in Community Colleges* (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: July 22, 2008), p. 8.
- <sup>76</sup> CASAS, *California Adult Education: End-of-Year Progress Report to the Legislature: Implementation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II Program Year 2009 – July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009* (February 2010), p. 2.
- <sup>77</sup> Data on the completion of a high school diploma or GED are based on administrative records, not the follow-up survey.
- <sup>78</sup> Florida and Washington have had highly integrated systems for some time. The Florida system is centered on K-12 but includes higher education. Indiana, Maine, Wisconsin, and many of the states participating in the philanthropically funded Achieving the Dream initiative (Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Connecticut, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington, Arkansas, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) are at various stages of integration of data systems. At least eight states now have the ability to share student-level data across the K-12 and higher education sectors, and an additional three states are upgrading their systems to achieve that goal. Jobs for the Future, *Good Data, Strong Commitment, Better Policy, Improved Outcomes* (no date), p. 5.
- <sup>79</sup> See *Power Tools: Designing State Community College Data and Performance Measurement Systems To Increase Student Success* (no date), downloaded from [www.achievingthedream.org/\\_pdf/\\_publicpolicy/powertools.pdf](http://www.achievingthedream.org/_pdf/_publicpolicy/powertools.pdf) on October 10, 2010.
- <sup>80</sup> Both the Adult Education Program and the California Community Colleges are required to provide annual progress reports to the Legislature. The Adult Education Program must report on the implementation of Title II of the WIA. In 2004, AB 1417 (Pacheco, Chapter 581 of 2004) required the California Community Colleges to create a performance measurement system known as Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges, which provides the Legislature an annual report on statewide and individual college performance.
- <sup>81</sup> One study that looked at the influence of performance accountability systems reported that some of the colleges interviewed had begun to restrict admission of less-prepared students to certain programs in order to raise their graduation rates. Kevin J. Dougherty and Esther Hong, *State Systems of Performance Accountability for Community Colleges: Impacts and Lessons for Policymakers* (Jobs for the Future: July 2005), p. 8.
- <sup>82</sup> Kevin J. Dougherty and Esther Hong, *State Systems of Performance Accountability for Community Colleges: Impacts and Lessons for Policymakers* (Jobs for the Future: July 2005), pp. 8-9.
- <sup>83</sup> The CDE has been engaged in a strategic planning process involving stakeholders both outside and within the Adult Education Program system. Their conclusions are similar in many respects to the recommendations we present here. The CDE recommends coordinating statewide governance with other state-level partners to establish a common vision and coordinated processes; aligning funding to needs and goals; promoting regional collaboration; building pathways to college and careers through partnerships with high schools, workforce development agencies, and postsecondary institutions; creating a network of Academic and Career Transition Centers; expanding the development and use of evidence-based curriculum and instruction; enhancing and incorporating support services, such as financial aid, childcare, and transportation; strengthening staffing and support professional development; and enhancing accountability and data systems. See California Department of Education, *Linking Adults to Opportunity: A Blueprint for the Transformation of the California Department of Education Adult Education Program*, Working Draft (October 13, 2010).

