



Supporting the  
ABLE system to enhance  
student achievement



## ABLE Resource Center Network Quarterly Newsletter

# Best Practices — Snapshots from the Field

From Webster's Online  
Dictionary:

**Transition:** conversion;  
an event that results in  
transformation.

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## Transitions in Ohio

by Adrienne Glandon

Transitions to postsecondary education and careers have become increasingly more important for the success of ABE and ESOL students. Recently, many changes have taken place at the state level that impacted the transition to postsecondary education. One significant change in the postsecondary arena was Governor Strickland's creation of the University System of Ohio (<http://universitysystem.ohio.gov/>) which will serve to unite Ohio's postsecondary providers. One driver in this process has been the Career Readiness Credential or CRC (<http://www.act.org/certificate/index.html>). The Ohio Department of Education (ODE), ABLE Office proposed convening a Transitions Task Force to address the issues associated with transitioning to postsecondary education and to the workplace.

Now in its second year, the Transitions Task Force is a collaborative effort between the Northwest Resource Center (NWRC), ODE and the ABLE Evaluation and Design Project at The Ohio State University (OSU). The Task Force is representative of ABLE, the adult workforce, career centers, community colleges and state agencies. The first year was largely spent developing an understanding between the agencies with how ABLE services fit into the larger picture of transitions. The second year of the task force shifted to focusing on how ABLE services can be improved to bridge gaps for students entering postsecondary education/job training and the workforce. The Transitions Task Force has been split into two groups, an advisory group and a work group. The advisory group aids with policy recommendations and the review of products drafted by the work group. The particular product that (**cont'd on p.9**)



## Emerging Practices in ESOL Transitions

By Donna Albanese and Christina Theuerling

The change of the ESOL NRS levels in FY07 brought about new challenges for ABE programs and instructors. It seemed that programs were left with a population of advanced students requiring services they could no longer provide. What do they do with this population? The solution seemed to be TRANSITION.

Today transitions have become even more important with ABE's upcoming alignment with community colleges and the Governor's Turn Around Ohio plan to boost the economy and talent development in the state. ABE programs have found unique ways to help their ESOL students transition to work and/or postsecondary education and training.

ESOL students could transition to any of the following: **ABE – basic skills or GED preparation classes, TOEFL preparation classes, postsecondary or the workplace.** Faced with such a wide variety, goal-setting becomes imperative! Conferencing with the student about his/her goals allows teachers to provide the preparation necessary for a transition to occur.

Once the teacher knows the student's ultimate goals, classroom design can begin. Some programs are offering a formal transition class and some are taking a more informal approach by integrating classroom strategies to set an environment similar to work or college. For example, South-Western City Schools has a formal transitions class, with class syllabus, to prepare students for the GED and or higher education. Students are referred to the class based on their CASAS reading score. Sylvania City Schools has a similar transitions class for ESOL students scoring high on the BEST Plus and CASAS tests. The GED coordinator and ESOL teacher worked together to design a class with emphasis on vocabulary and writing skills for these students.

Contrary to popular belief programs do not have to offer a formal "transitions" class in order to help students. Simply by integrating the skills necessary for transitioning into the current curriculum and classroom lesson plans provides natural preparation. ESOL students at Gallia-Jackson-Vinton JVSD practice timed essay writing, which helps prepare them for the TOEFL exam and college writing. They also use book clubs to strengthen vocabulary and quarterly oral presentations for which they conduct research. Computer instruction is part of the curriculum at Washington Local which is useful for postsecondary preparation, the TOEFL IBT (Internet Based Test) and even the workplace. At the Wayne County JVSD, ESOL students wanting math instruction take ABE/GED math classes. This is a win-win situation for the student. He or she is working with native English speaking students while learning the math content.

The Lorain City Schools promotes a learning environment that simulates a college environment: students are strongly encouraged to be prompt, attend with little to no absences, and complete homework and turn in on time.

Here are some other examples of how teachers can embed transition strategies in their current classes: provide academic skills such as essays, high vocabulary, reading, critical thinking skills, note-taking, study skills, and advanced



listening & speaking skills, use a class syllabus so students know what is being taught each class period, consider managed enrollment such as an 8-week class where students can see the class has a beginning and end date, provide advising services for postsecondary preparation such as helping students understand the education system, financial aid, college visits, etc., teach interviewing skills and orienting to the workplace culture. These are just some of the many ideas you can use to help your ESL student prepare for college and/or work.

The NCSALL models provide more examples of transition components that teachers can integrate into ESOL classes. Basically, creating a classroom that simulates a community college environment, contextualizing teaching and learning to reflect necessary skills and current trends in the workplace and ultimately providing intensive learning opportunities will all better prepare students for a transition.

NCSALL [http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op\\_collegetransitions.pdf](http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf)

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## **Bridging the Gap...for Students Transitioning to Higher Education**

**By Judy Franks**

While high school graduates have access to postsecondary education guidance and recruitment activities, many GED graduates do not have the same opportunities. The GED Scholars Initiative provides a program for students interested in bridging the gap between receiving their GEDs and attending Kent State University. The mission statement for the GED Scholars Initiative reads as follows:

The GED Scholars Initiative Bridge Program supports GED graduates wanting to attend KSU by providing advice and information about procedures and processes for being accepted into college, as well as resources on financial aid and academic policies and programs. Potential students have the opportunity to ask questions and receive information on anything related to transitioning into attending Kent State University.

The program, now in its second year, helps potential students manage the college enrollment process by providing a series of five (5) workshops where students can:

- focus on the admissions and financial aid processes;
- learn about academic advising with a campus tour;



- shadow a KSU student with similar academic interests;
- participate in a series of study strategies on note-taking, writing, technology and test-taking;
- begin the application process.

Through funding from the Ohio Dominion Foundation, the Bridge Program offers financial and support services to future Kent State students who hold GED diplomas. With completion of all five (5) workshop sessions, students receive a fee waiver for the KSU admissions application and a \$300 book scholarship to be used during their first semester. This model could be adopted by ABLE programs that have established partnerships with neighboring university systems.

The Bridge Program takes the uncertainty out of coming to college and helps prospective students navigate the larger university system while giving them a chance to become part of a smaller college community. Each fall and spring semester, five (5) to ten (10) students have participated, with a total of 26 participants to date. Of that number, 81% have matriculated into the university with only five (5) students not enrolling. As of the Fall 2007 semester, 88% were still enrolled. Adult students often have to “stop-out” for a semester due to various circumstances, but the GED Scholars Initiative provides support supplemental to the Bridge Program in the form of mentors who can encourage students when they are struggling. Bridge students also carry a higher GPA than their non-Bridge counterparts, ranging from 2.799 to 2.495 respectively.

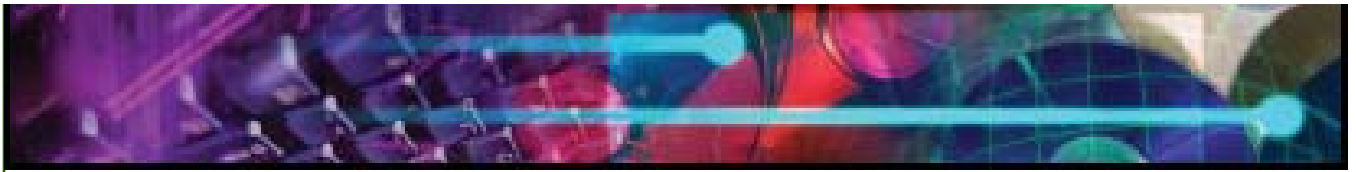
For more information about this program, contact Judy Franks at [jfranks@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:jfranks@literacy.kent.edu) or Brian White at [bwhite@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:bwhite@literacy.kent.edu).

We would be excited to share the benefits and framework of this program more extensively with you.

Here’s what students have said about the GED Scholars Initiative Bridge Program:

“Since attending the Bridge Program, I feel more encouraged and confident in going forward with attending college and finally fulfilling my dream...I do not feel I would have pursued any of this on my own because this was a very scary step for me...I am thankful for their help.”

“The Bridge Program was very beneficial to me...it was nice to know what to expect by actually being there before I enrolled...in shadowing a student, I was able to experience college classes, and making me feel more prepared for my own classes...I had the opportunity to ask a lot of questions about Kent State...I would recommend that anyone who is unfamiliar with college should take this program and gain the information that is needed to get your foot in the door.”



## **Transitions: A Look from the Southwest**

**By Lynn Reese**

“Transitions” is a word that is heard in many ABLÉ conversations. At the Resource Center, we were talking about our role in the transitions process. We know that our programs are placing great emphasis on helping students focus on postsecondary options, whether it is college, training or the workplace. We interviewed three program directors to get a sampling of how they were managing the challenges of transitions. Here are the highlights:

### **Miami Valley Career and Technical Center ABLÉ Program**

*Amy Leedy, Director*

At Miami Valley Career and Technical Center, close to 50% of the students enrolled in the ABLÉ program have postsecondary training as their goal with a high percentage achieving that goal. Amy Leedy says the key to this kind of transition success is in establishing the attitude that ABLÉ/workforce is a package. “It’s how we do business, and it’s good for the student,” Leedy says. For the student, moving from basic skills to workplace training is seamless. Orientation is vital when students come to our program. During orientation, the student’s future is discussed. Achieving his/her GED is a goal, but the program emphasizes the need to move beyond the GED. What they do with the GED is very important to their future, but the students should consider all the options that will become available to them once they have their GED. Students have access to adult counselors through shared services with the Center. These counselors can help direct the students to long term goals. Along with providing basic skills instruction to assist in passing the WorkKeys test, MVCTC teachers also teach medical math for students enrolled in the LPN program. Bringing an educator’s perspective to the LPN program has greatly enhanced learning. Administrative issues (e.g. budgeting) have to be managed between Center partners, but the students only know that the instruction they’re receiving from ABLÉ is the first step toward being successful in their workforce training programs.

### **Middletown City Schools ABLÉ Program**

*Rose Marie Stiehl, Director*

The number of students in Middletown choosing postsecondary education as a goal more than doubled from 11% in 2006 to 24% in 2007. Rose Marie Stiehl attributes the improvement to (1) increased efforts in col-



laboration and (2) raising staff awareness regarding transitions. Key actions included fostering collaborations with Miami University Middletown (MUM), Butler Technology and Career Development Schools (Butler Tech). Butler Tech routinely referred students who did not pass the WorkKeys test (Butler Tech's intake assessment) to the Middletown ABLE program located onsite. Miami University Middletown offered a special program entitled, "Write Now!" for GED graduates and students, and a summer program is planned in cooperation with MUM. A Workplace Literacy site at Middletown's hospital assisted students toward success in LPN programs by studying medical terminology.

Other key actions included facilitating activities to build transitions awareness for the students and teachers. For the students, the seed was planted during orientation and registration appropriately called "First Step." The conference between the student and the teacher to set goals evolved with a stronger, clear emphasis on postsecondary education and training. Each Middletown GED graduate received a letter of congratulations from Butler Tech and Miami University. A full day of staff development focused on transitions and included presentations by representatives from many postsecondary options; it was an excellent foundation builder for all members of the staff. Additionally, transitions were and continue to be a recurring topic on the monthly staff meeting agendas. Basically, there has been a new intensive effort toward leading the student to ask, "What's next?"

### **Hamilton ABLE**

*Kathy Petrek, Director*

Having an ABLE site at Workforce One Butler County Job Center ensures that many students enter the ABLE program with postsecondary goals to attend Butler Technology and Career Development School. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Employment Services emphasizes the need of having postsecondary education and training. They refer students to ABLE to prepare for the WorkKeys test and prepare for postsecondary programs such as the LPN program. Hamilton also has a site at Miami University-Hamilton Campus. Students are referred through the Office of Learning Assistance. The Hamilton ABLE program assists students preparing to attend college and also works with the faculty at Miami University-Hamilton Campus to continue to offer assistance to adult students who need additional help in introductory college courses. In addition, Hamilton is planning summer programs relating to college transitions that will target GED and high school graduates.

### **Summary**

One role that the Southwest Resource Center can perform is to facilitate communication among Southwest programs



about their respective transition efforts. In addition, we will explore the types of professional development needed to assist ABLÉ program staff in their continuing challenge of preparing students for success in postsecondary options. We recognize that teachers are our best partners in identifying what reading and writing demands postsecondary education and the work world will pose for students. We count on your continued input as we look more closely at how the Resource Center can partner with you in the transitions process.

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## **Art Ellison: Building a Voice for Advocacy**

**By Al Toops**

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007, nearly 30 ABLÉ Practitioners attended a one-day presentation on strengthening adult basic education advocacy efforts in Ohio. This professional development opportunity was co-hosted by the Ohio Literacy Network (OLN) and the Ohio Association for Adult and Continuing Education (OAACE). These two organizations have partnered to form the Ohio Coalition for Literacy (OCAL). Jointly, these two organizations sponsor the “Literacy Ohio” Web site which is the coalition’s online home.

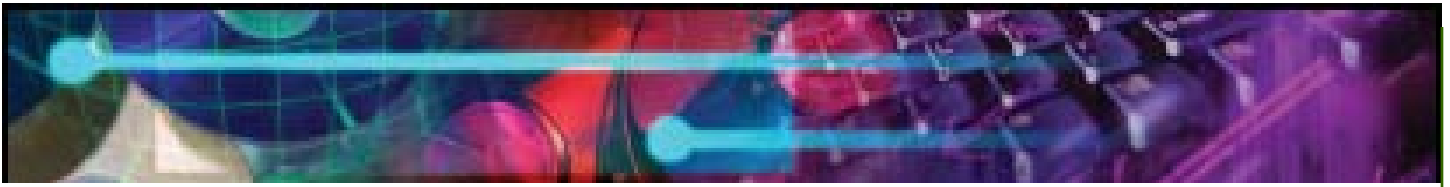
Art Ellison, Policy Committee Chair for the National Association for State Directors of Adult Education, leads the NAS-DAE’s federal legislative activities. He is also the New Hampshire Director of Adult Education. The second presenter, Dwayne Sattler, is the Communications Consultant for OAACE.

Rick McIntosh, the OAACE Advocacy Co-Chair, and Alan Toops, OLN Executive Director, introduced the day, set expectations and turned the morning over to Dwayne and Art.

Dwayne presented information on current state leadership and initiatives important to ABLÉ. He also provided insight and guidance on how the coalition should focus advocacy efforts.

Art Ellison focused his presentation around four key points: (1) building an effective communications network; (2) engaging local participation; (3) increasing adult student participation; and (4) developing an advocacy strategy.

Art explained that an effective statewide communications strategy should include a purpose and a plan outlining the advo-



cacy activities to focus on specific legislators and legislation. A successful strategy will reflect the model developed for a national campaign to take advantage of the message being sent to congress and others about ABLE..

Another key point mentioned by Art was the importance of local educators becoming more involved with advocacy activities. This can be accomplished by working to actively engage their legislators by sending them newsletters, inviting them to visit programs and volunteering for local campaigns and committees.

Art suggested that the level of success in advocating for adult literacy increases as adult students become more engaged in the process. Letter writing, phone calls and public speaking all paint a picture that helps legislators understand the value of adult literacy. Art said that the most effective advocacy efforts include at least 80% student and 20% program-generated calls and letters.

Art addressed the last key point at the end of the day as the participants moved into small groups. The small-group sessions focused on planning how to put Art's recommendations into action. Each group worked to create a core team that would develop a strategy, plan for implementation and provide feedback on the plan..

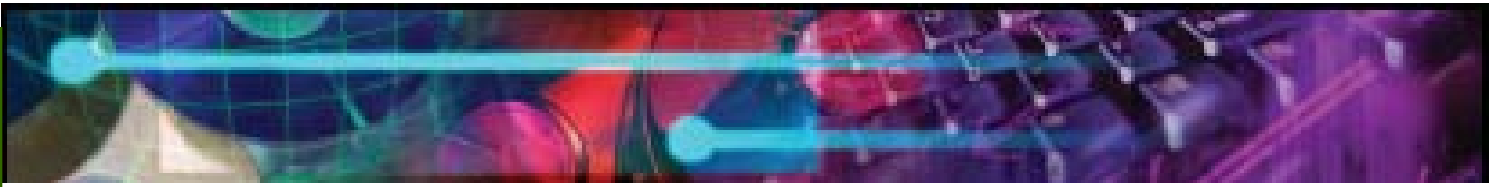
There are two activities currently being considered. The first, a "Dear Colleague" letter campaign asks for a commitment to advocate for ABLE via a letter containing four (4) to six (6) suggested activities that practitioners could commit to completing during the year. The second proposal involves conducting a statewide voter registration drive for adult students..

Art concluded the day by reinforcing the need for advocates. He encouraged all of us to be advocates for our students and our programs.

President Bush signed the final appropriations bill that contains a \$9 million cut in adult education funding from last year's total and a \$22 million cut in the Even Start program. The reduction of adult education funding came as part of an across-the-board decrease of 1.747% that was applied to many educational programs. We all need to acknowledge the commitment of time and energy by our people in the field whose efforts kept us from an even larger cut.

In light of this disappointing outcome, the Policy Committee and staff of the National Council of State Directors are currently reviewing our advocacy work over the past two years. We will be preparing a new action plan that can be used to campaign for FY'09 appropriations, which begins the first Monday in February when the President sends that budget to Congress.

Thank you for your fine work in the past. As we move adult education into the forefront of our policymakers' educational priorities, advocates for ABLE are essential. .



(cont'd from p. 1)

has been the focus of both groups is the ABLE Transitions Model.

The ABLE Transitions Model was first drafted by the work group. The model is due to be finalized by the end of fiscal year 2008. It will cover transitions to both postsecondary and the workforce. Along with input from the Transitions Task Force, a variety of national research informed the development of the model. One particular piece, *Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models* ([http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op\\_collegetransitions.pdf](http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf)), was disseminated by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The report detailed five college transition models: (1) Advising, (2) Career Pathways, (3) College Preparatory, (4) English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and (5) GED-Plus. These models were compared to Ohio ABLE program transition information as presented in the fiscal year 2008 grant. The ABLE transition information was obtained by examining the action steps under the strategy “*Assist students to obtain and retain employment and to transition to postsecondary education/trainings.*” In addition to the five NCSALL models, the same program data was compared to the Integrated Basic Education Skills Training Model (I-BEST): [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/docs/data/research\\_reports/resh\\_05-2\\_i-best.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/docs/data/research_reports/resh_05-2_i-best.pdf).

As evidenced by the transitions efforts described above, helping students to succeed in postsecondary education and in the workplace is and will continue to be vital. Over time, more students will be entering ABLE programs with the goal of entering postsecondary education/training and gaining employment. It is our hope that, by developing a well-informed transitions model along with supports, the ABLE programs will be better equipped to help students succeed.

For more information, you may contact Adrienne Glandon at 1-800-848-4815, extension 8-3720, or [glandon.8@osu.edu](mailto:glandon.8@osu.edu).

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## **ABLE Transitions: Making the Connections**

**By Jody Angelone**

As we continue to look toward better preparing our students for postsecondary education and training options, the GED credential is no longer the definitive benchmark for the ABLE classroom. The high school diploma or its equivalent is no longer a sufficient credential for most jobs today. ABLE instructors need to know and be able to teach the skills and content necessary to prepare their students for a successful transition into postsecondary education and training for a skilled workforce. A large percentage of individuals entering ABLE programs set a goal for obtaining a GED with very few identify postsecondary education and training as a goal.



In transitioning to postsecondary education, high school graduates are almost twice as likely to attain an associate degree as GED recipients (54% versus 28%) (Reder, 2000). In addition the grades of high school completers and GED recipients who transition to postsecondary education and training are virtually the same, but their persistence rates vary dramatically (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy).

There is minimal formal connection between ABLE, career development programs and community college programs (Reder, 2000). As a result, the transition of individuals from ABLE to postsecondary programs is often unsuccessful (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy).

5% of GED students who pursue a bachelor's degree actually attain the degree, as compared to 75% of high school graduates.

27% of GED students who begin two-year colleges complete these programs, as compared to 55.7 % of high school graduates.

32.8% of GED recipients enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 73.3% of high school graduates.

45% of GED recipients who enroll in vocational certificate programs complete the programs, as compared to 50.7% of high school graduates.

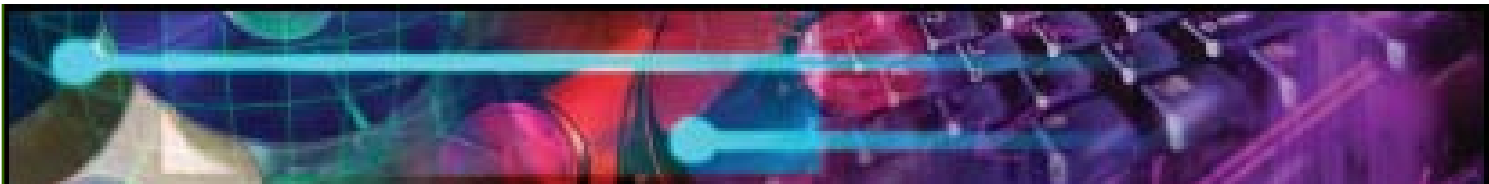
Students face numerous challenges when they transition to postsecondary education and training. The challenges and strategies for overcoming them exist at both the individual and system levels.

### ***Barriers to successful transition***

Individuals in adult basic and literacy education programs face a myriad of barriers to successful transition into postsecondary education and training, including:

- Inadequate or outdated information on the skills required in today's job market;
- Lack of financial resources to pay for postsecondary education;
- Lack of role models who have succeeded in postsecondary education or training;
- Limited financial resources and knowledge of financial-assistance programs;
- Lack of social networks that value education and are willing to provide support;
- Lack of understanding of the postsecondary system; and
- Limited academic skills.

In addition, limitations within the secondary educational system can present barriers to successful transition,



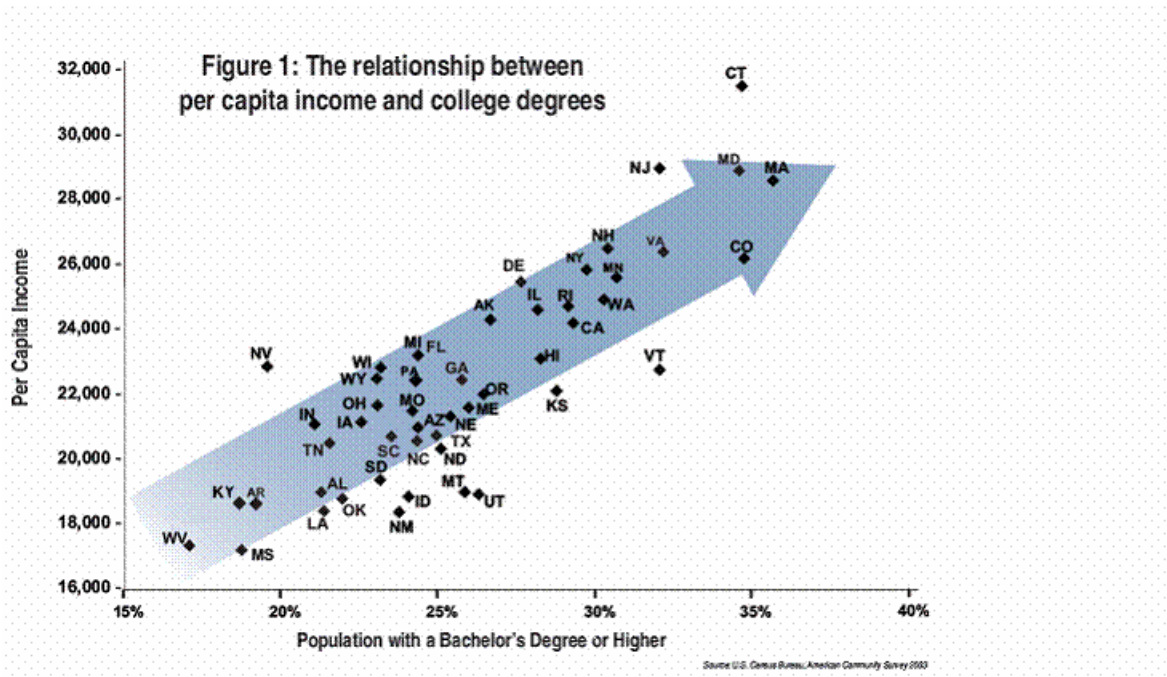
including:

- Failure to encourage individuals to consider postsecondary education and training as next steps;
- Lack of understanding on the part of the secondary schools about how postsecondary education ;
- Lack of formal networks to support transition; and
- Lack of appropriate support for individuals once they are in the postsecondary system.

### ***General strategies for overcoming barriers***

For individuals to overcome these barriers it is important that they increase their understanding of the value of higher level education and training. This can be supported by having role models with whom they can identify. Also, they need to develop their understanding of paths that transition into postsecondary education and training and employment. One of the main barriers is the lack of resources. In obtaining information on postsecondary requirements and resources, the individual can develop planning and problem-solving skills to increase their ability to deal with demands that might conflict with educational goals.

As the ABLÉ providers and postsecondary education and training increase cooperation between them, the individuals are provided ongoing support during the transition to postsecondary education or training. (Brandt, Rose M. “Career Gateway supports adult student transitions.” *Field notes for ABLÉ Administrators, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006 Edition.*)





## **GED-to-College: A System of Support at Ohio University - Lancaster**

**By Sharon Reynolds**

The inspiration for the GED-to-College program at Ohio University's Lancaster branch came from a visit to a similar program at Cape Cod Community College. The drive to provide a transitional program for GED students came from the knowledge that today's students need more than a GED to be competitive in the workforce. The willingness on the part of Ohio University branch campuses to provide a necessary but expensive program made GED-to-College a reality.

The first GED-to-College cohort of 12 students started at Ohio University Lancaster in September 2006. This group attends some classes together. Several classes have been designed specifically for them. For example, "University Resources" is a course designed to help students navigate the often confusing University system. Each week a new representative from a University office comes to the class and speaks about his/her aspect of the University system. These guest speakers may be from the library, human resources, financial aid or any other campus office. Students are encouraged to ask questions about the office's policies and services in a safe environment.

GED-to-College students also take a study skills class and a writing support class. These classes were developed using feedback from students and instructors in the program.

Students are required to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in order to keep their tuition scholarships. Many GED-to-College students are non-traditional students with families and other issues that can get in the way of attending class and completing coursework. Childcare, transportation and financial issues are all important concerns. Many of these concerns are addressed by the University or the county. Childcare is provided free of charge to OU-Lancaster students and staff. Lancaster has a public transportation system, which students ride for free. Tuition for these students is paid through the GED-to-College grant with funding provided by the Fairfield County Foundation, as long as the students maintain their GPA.

Still, personal issues get in the way. An important feature of the GED-to-College program is the weekly support group. Students from any cohort can attend the support group. This group is facilitated by an instructor, but is led by the students themselves. It is an opportunity for veteran students to mentor the new students and assist in finding solutions to the personal issues that would otherwise result in students dropping out.



Multilayered support is the key to retaining GED students in postsecondary institutions. The GED-to-College program at Ohio University Lancaster is a good example of how these layers of support -- financial, educational and emotional -- can combine to help learners of all ages and backgrounds achieve their educational goals.

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