



SHOP TALK # 3:

A Blueprint for Success: An Update on the Texas Education Agency's Implementation of Education Rider 82

Published June 20, 2006

Out of federal funds appropriated in Strategy A.2.5, Adult Education and Family Literacy, the Commissioner shall allocate an amount not to exceed \$850,000 in fiscal year 2006 for the development of a demand-driven workplace literacy and basic skills curriculum. The Texas Workforce Commission shall provide resources, industry-specific information, and expertise identified as necessary by the Texas Education Agency to support the development and implementation of the curriculum.*

Education Rider 82, 79th State Legislative Regular Session, 2005

Background

To implement Education Rider 82, the Texas Education Agency has directed Texas LEARNS¹ to develop deliverables according to the direction given in the rider. Texas LEARNS is developing the following resources and services:

- Industry-specific curricula that can be replicated across the state. The sectors included for curriculum development are healthcare, manufacturing, trades, and sales and service. Initial development focuses on adult learners with limited English language proficiency.
- A collection of best practices describing models of successful literacy services for job seekers and current workers.
- Professional development for adult educators delivering the services to future job seekers and current workers.

Guiding Principles

- Adult Education's capacity to deliver effective work-related services is critically linked to workforce development partners serving the same customers – learners/workers and employers. Assistance from Local Workforce Development Boards is essential in developing linkages among education and training partners, the business community, and support services.
- Conventional English language and job training activities – running parallel to one another but infrequently meeting – have not always been effective with English language learners needing to improve their career prospects.
- Sequential programs requiring workers to first master English and obtain a GED certificate before beginning vocational training are often ineffective and require significant blocks of time many learners do not have. Integrated approaches must become the standard course offering for these workers.

Curriculum Development Design

El Paso Community College, Seguin ISD Adult Education Cooperative, and Trinity Valley Community College have been selected by Texas LEARNS to develop and pilot the curricular responses to Rider 82. Each one offers a unique background in serving adult learners as well as experience in collaborating with local businesses and industry:

- El Paso Community College (EPCC): The College has a long history of experience in workforce literacy and serving the displaced worker with limited English language skills. EPCC is the lead institution in this initiative, and is responsible for providing the other two institutions with direction. Its

¹ Texas LEARNS is the statewide Adult Education and Family Literacy program administered by the Harris County Department of Education through a contract with the Texas Education Agency.

* This amount indicates the *maximum* amount allocated for this initiative, not what is being spent.

team is also developing curricular modules for the customer service/sales and service sector. Employers who have provided input to EPCC on curriculum development include J.C. Penney, K-Mart, Allstate Insurance, and Coca Cola.

- Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC): A small northeast Texas college serving rural and semi-rural communities, TVCC has a history of “bundling” courses for local school districts and preparing adult learners for successful transitions into healthcare, business, and trade career paths. TVCC is developing a “how to” guide for adult education programs containing tips on partnering with post secondary education and training providers. TVCC is also partnering with the Lake Country Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) to outreach minorities interested in entry level health careers.
- Seguin ISD (SISD): SISD serves the Central Texas counties of Comal, Guadalupe, and Kendall (New Braunfels, Boerne, Schertz-Cibolo, Seguin). This small adult education provider has pioneered successful partnerships with workforce and economic development partners in these cities and with the Alamo Community College District at the Central Texas Technology Center in New Braunfels.

In response to industry requests, SISD is developing a multi-phase initiative offering instruction in health care-related ESL, manufacturing-related ESL, and industry-based GED preparation. Employer partners include Mission Pharmacal, Moll Industries, Chemical Lime, Kirkwood Manor, McKenna Hospital, and The Institute for Public Health and Education Research (TIPHER) located in New Braunfels.

Curriculum Pilot Partnerships

The first draft curriculum modules are expected to be used in a “soft launch” during the summer of 2006. This “trial run” will allow developers to gather feedback from instructors and learners. Results will be used to inform revision / further development of deliverables and to ensure that they are replicable – with minimal adaptation – in other regions of the state with similar industry-related needs.

Texas LEARNS has contracted with Barbara Tondre (Texas Trade and Consulting) to act as project facilitator. Barbara is coordinating curriculum development, identifying pilot sites, and facilitating workforce partnerships to assist in implementation. She is also responsible for the professional development components for adult education administrators and instructors.

The Texas Workforce Commission has helped identify businesses and local workforce development boards interested in collaborating with curriculum delivery pilot sites and in supporting employability skills development. Partnership agreements are being developed in the Cameron County, Lower Rio Grande, and Upper Rio Grande Valley workforce development regions. Northeast Texas Community College and Harris County Department of Education already have long standing partnerships with local businesses (Pilgrim’s Pride, Lone Star Steel, the Kolache Factory, Family Dollar) and will also pilot the curricular responses to Rider 82.

Texas LEARNS’ blueprint for success calls for seamless linkages between English language development, technical training, and job sourcing to produce workers ready for employment and job advancement, and to ensure that adult learners have access to a continuum of education and training services.