

Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS)

Fiscal Year 2021 Program Quality Review Summative Report

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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Office of Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) set out to improve its program monitoring and site visit protocols with the intention of bringing into greater alignment the state adult education performance standards with the new federal performance measures outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.

In order to achieve the outcomes required by WIOA, ACLS implemented a new theory of action focused on quality. The theory of action states in part that if ACLS aligns its Indicators of Program Quality (IPQ) with WIOA, aligns key documents with the IPQ (policy manual, open and competitive bid process), provides programs evaluative feedback through Program Quality Reviews (PQR), and delivers high quality professional development (PD), then students will demonstrate greater Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) and be better prepared to access college and careers as required by WIOA.

To this end, ACLS formed the Program Quality Team (PQ Team) whose charge was to redesign the former monitoring process and then conduct PQR of all Community Adult Learning Centers (CALC) and Correctional Institutions (CI) who received funding as part of the Fiscal Year 2019-2022 cycle.

In addition to reviewing literature on how to conduct effective reviews, the PQ Team also reviewed adult education monitoring protocols from other states (Florida, New Mexico, Illinois, and Colorado). Further, the PQ Team consulted other units within the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), even to the extent of shadowing other teams on their monitoring visits.

The purpose of the revised PQR process was to assess program quality against four key Indicators of Program Quality:

- Indicator of Program Quality 3-*Career Pathways Collaborations*
- Indicator of Program Quality 4-*Curriculum and Instruction*
- Indicator of Program Quality 7-*Organizational Capacity*
- Indicator of Program Quality 8-*Educational Leadership*

This process was intended to be formative and to assist programs in gaining an understanding of their quality as measured against standard benchmarks and, where applicable, acknowledge promising practices. PQR were first instituted in FY2019 and 25 programs were reviewed. In Fiscal Year 2020, in which the PQR schedule was truncated due to COVID-19, 20 programs were reviewed. ([See the Fiscal Year 2019 Program Quality Review Summative Report](#) and the [Fiscal Year 2020 Program Quality Review Summative Report](#) for more information).

ACLS used a set of four ratings and indicator-specific rubrics to determine the quality of programs at a given point in time. Program Quality Reviews used multiple sources of evidence including interviews, program-developed materials, program data, curriculum, lesson plans and classroom observations.

Review Teams were comprised of anywhere between two and eleven members, depending on program size. In addition to PQ Team members, Review Teams could also include ACLS program specialists, ACLS leadership, and ACLS Program Quality Review consultants. A local MassHire workforce development board representative was also invited to participate in each review.

All Review Team members and consultants had extensive background knowledge in one or more of the following areas: educational leadership, teaching, curriculum development, adult education research, adult English language learners, digital literacy, and adult education program evaluation. Further, all Review Team members received in-depth training on the PQR protocol, including but not limited to: interview facilitation, evaluation rubrics, classroom observations, collection of evidence, calibration of ratings, and report writing.

With the goal of establishing validity and reliability for the collected evidence, Review Teams used the following rubric to determine ratings:

Limited Evidence	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
<i>The program demonstrates little to no evidence; significant concerns are noted.</i>	<i>The program demonstrates inconsistent evidence; moderate concerns are noted.</i>	<i>The program demonstrates consistent evidence; minor concerns are noted.</i>	<i>The program demonstrates consistent evidence; potential exemplar.</i>

Program Quality Reviews were intended to collect evidence from multiple sources (e.g., students, teachers, program leadership, advisors, document reviews, and classroom observations) and reflect a program's performance at a particular point in time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of this report is to highlight promising practices collected in Fiscal Year 202 that could be replicated in CALC and CI adult education programs funded in Massachusetts. The intended audience for this report is Massachusetts adult education program leaders, Massachusetts professional development providers, Massachusetts policy makers, and other stakeholders striving to improve and sustain high quality adult education services.

Analysis, Data Sources and Report Organization

In Fiscal Year 2021, ACLS conducted a total of 35 Program Quality Reviews (for a detailed list of these programs, see *Appendix A*). This end-of-year-report provides a summary of these programs' ratings and highlights promising practices.

The primary data sources for this report were the 35 PQR reports. Rating percentages were calculated by dividing the number of programs that received the same rating by 35, the number of total sites visited in Fiscal Year 2021.

The report is organized by the four key Indicators of Program Quality. For each Indicator the following are provided: a table summarizing the percentage of programs receiving ratings of *Limited Evidence*, *Developing*, *Proficient*, and *Exemplary*; a synopsis intended to summarize the main findings; a data analysis section; and a section on promising practices and areas for improvement.

Each indicator is rated at the indicator level. Additionally, Indicator 4-*Curriculum and Instruction* is also rated at the standard level. The rating process for Indicator 4 provides programs and ACLS with specific information about programs' performance against each of the standards, as well as general, big picture information about programs' performance against the overall indicator.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all Program Quality Reviews in Fiscal Year 2021 were conducted remotely, with interviews conducted through online meeting platforms (primarily Zoom and Microsoft Teams) and classroom observations operated through Zoom. Instruction in 29 of the 35 programs was fully remote, mostly using the Zoom meeting platform; four programs (all housed in correctional facilities) held onsite, face-to-face classes during the PQR; one program offered both hybrid (some students learning remotely while others were in the classroom) and remote classes; and, one program incorporated remote, hybrid, and fully onsite classes. For consistency of data collection, all class observations were done remotely, and all but those in correctional facilities were conducted in fully remote classrooms.

Appendix A provides a list of the CALC and CI programs that received a PQR in Fiscal Year 2021 and *Appendix B* is a detailed chart of these programs' ratings in each of the four Indicators of Program Quality. In order to preserve confidentiality of specific program ratings, any correlation between *Appendix A* and *Appendix B* has been eliminated.

Summary of Findings

This summary addresses the overall ratings, areas of overall strength, and areas for improvement. Figure 1 shows the combined indicator level ratings of the 35 programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021.

Figure 1

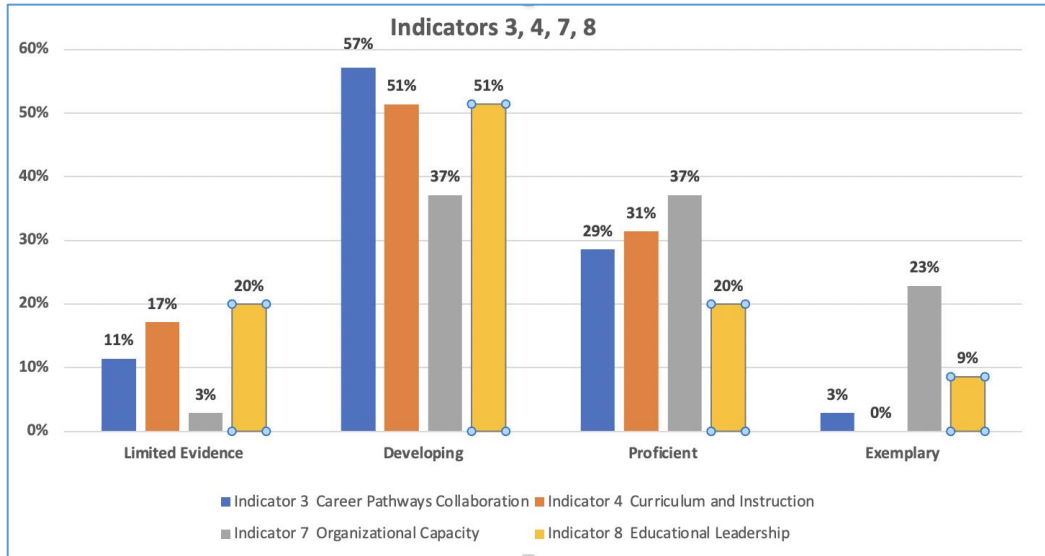


Figure 2 below indicates the combined standard level ratings of Indicator 4-*Curriculum and Instruction* for the 35 programs reviewed in FY2021.

Figure 2

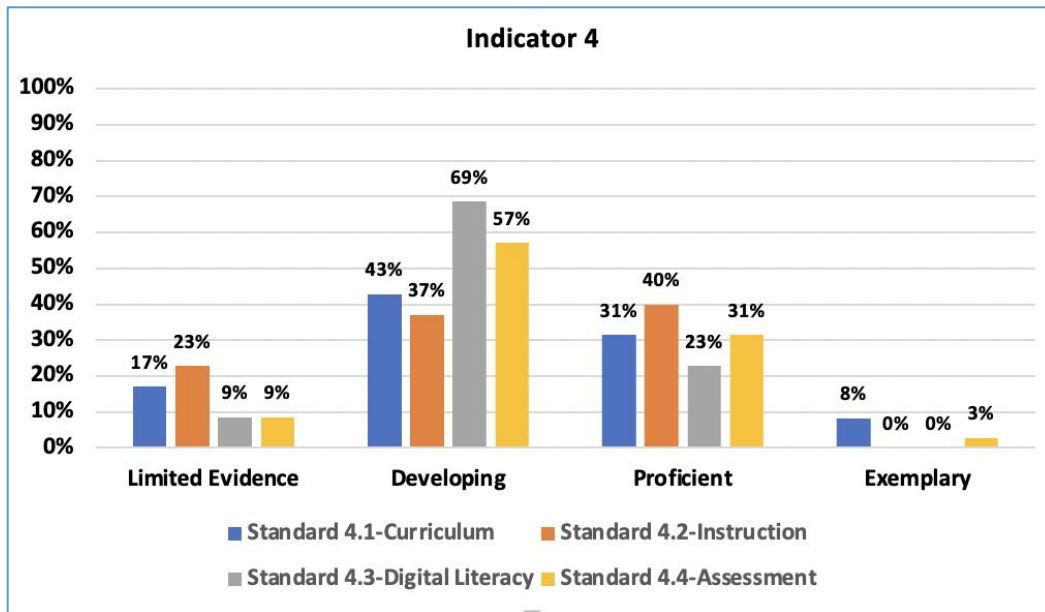
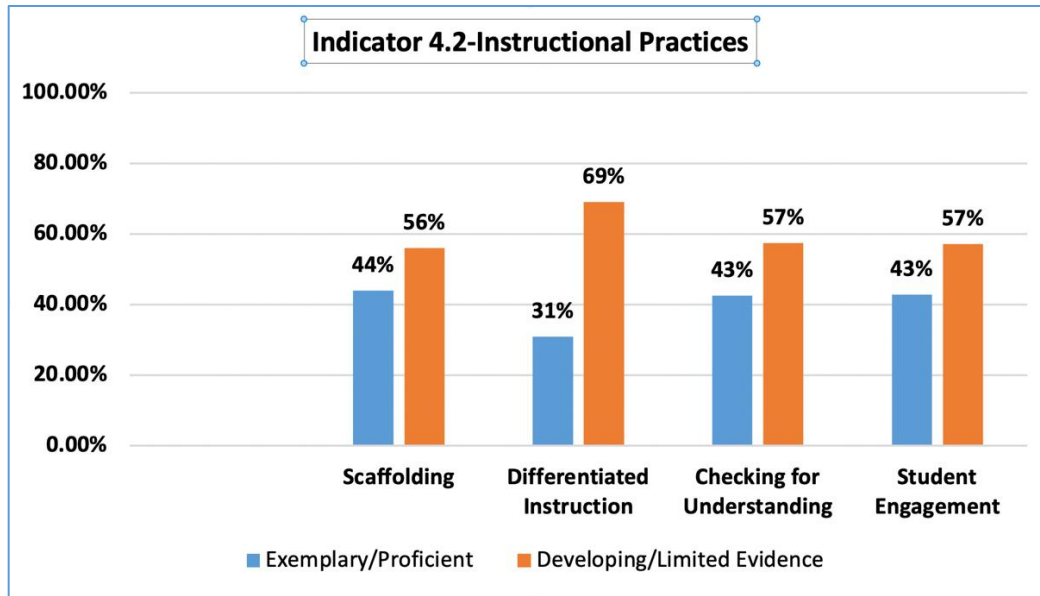


Figure 3 shows the combined ratings for the four key instructional practices (*scaffolding, differentiated instruction, checking for understanding, and student engagement*) of Indicator 4.2-*Instruction*. ACLS remotely observed a total of 325 classes at the 35 programs visited in Fiscal Year 2021.

Figure 3

Overall Strengths

Overall, there was one primary area of strength for the programs evaluated in Fiscal Year 2021: Indicator 7-Organizational Support (See Figure 1).

Regarding Indicator 7, 23 percent of programs received a rating of *Exemplary* and 37 percent of programs were rated *Proficient*, while 37 percent of the remaining programs were rated *Developing*, and 3 percent received a rating of *Limited Evidence*. Because all Program Quality Reviews in Fiscal Year 2021 were conducted remotely, data concerning program sites were obtained through interviews. Based on these interview responses, in general, programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021 had safe, clean, and accessible sites, quality working conditions, and access to quality resources, including technology. In multisite programs, however, there were discrepancies in the quality of space and resources across locations.

Student access to technology (mostly laptops and Chromebooks) was available in the majority of programs, with organizations investing in the technology required for online learning and lending devices to students. Staff in all of the reviewed programs reported being paid at or above the rates stipulated by ACLS, and most parent organizations of the reviewed adult education programs provided ongoing support to educational leaders.

Ten programs were highly rated in Fiscal Year 2021, receiving *Proficient* or *Exemplary* ratings in most or all of the four key indicators. While each program was unique in its strengths and needs, all ten had the following systems in place that contributed to their success:

- A focus on supporting students in setting and meeting education and career goals that is embedded into the program's culture

- Deliberate attention to providing evidence-based instructional practices, ongoing reflection of program activities, and building staff competence to meet students' needs
- Demonstrated and consistent support by the larger organization of which the program is a part
- Strong educational leadership leading to a vision for the program that is shared by staff, students, and stakeholders
- A strategic use of data to inform programmatic decisions

Overall Areas for Improvement

Two primary areas for improvement were identified: Indicator 4.3-*Digital Literacy* and Indicator 8.4-*Continuous Improvement Process*.

Twenty-seven of the 35 programs in Fiscal Year 2021 received a rating below *Proficient* for Indicator 4.3: *Digital Literacy*. Nearly all (89 percent) of the programs offered virtual instruction, with nearly all of those fully remote, and most shifted to incorporating new technologies. At the same time, focused instruction designed to strengthen students' ability to use a wide array of digital strategies and tools was limited, and many teachers struggled to develop their own capacity with technology. Digital literacy instruction was routinely embedded into instruction in only 26 percent of programs.

For Indicator 8.4-*Continuous Improvement*, 37 percent of programs had a clear continuous improvement process in place and provided opportunities for input from program staff and students, and in 34 percent of reviewed programs there was a fully developed continuous improvement plan.

Overall, 11 of the 35 programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021 received ratings of *Developing* or *Limited Evidence* across all indicators, and 9 programs were rated *Proficient* in one area.

INDICATOR 3: CAREER PATHWAY COLLABORATIONS

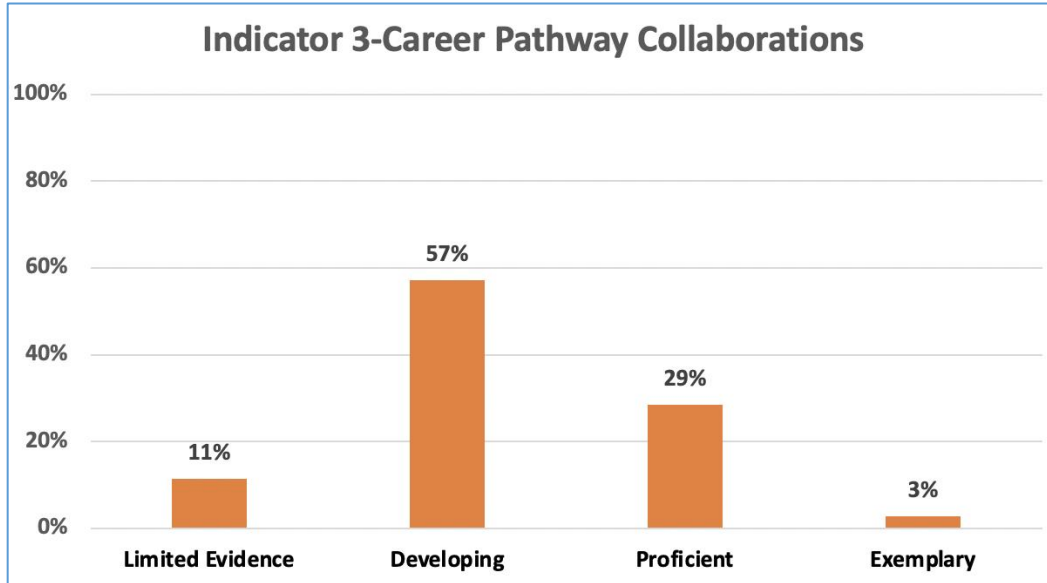
The program supports career pathways outlined in Massachusetts' state plan for a seamless system of education and workforce services aligned with regional employment needs identified in the Local Plan.

Review Teams analyzed interview responses, Local Plan Packages, local Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), and classroom instruction and curriculum materials to determine each program's overall rating for Indicator 3. In particular, ACLS looked for specific evidence regarding the two standards of this Indicator:

- The program collaborates with local education and workforce systems to jointly advance students, including students who are shared customers, to their next step with regard to education, training, and employment leading to family sustaining wages.
- The program's collaborations result in increased options for students in postsecondary education, training, and employment aligned with the regional employment needs identified in the Local Plan.

Figure 4 shows the overall ratings on Indicator 3-Career Pathway Collaborations for the programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021.

Figure 4



Indicator 3 Synopsis

Programs have in general established collaborations with local education and workforce partners, although the nature of these partnerships varies widely by program. However, ACLS found inconsistent evidence that those partnerships helped to accelerate students with regard to their next steps after leaving the program. In some programs, students are apprised of opportunities and supports within the program that can propel them to greater education and career options, while other programs provided few options or information. Additionally, there was evidence that some programs have a system for the identification and referral of shared customers, but there was less indication that all staff are fully apprised of collaborations and process.

Indicator 3 Data Analysis

Systems and procedures with regard to *Career Pathways Collaborations* varied widely across the 35 programs reviewed. Ninety-seven percent of programs have at least some collaborations with local workforce and education partners aligned with the priority industries identified in the Local Plan Package. In 54 percent of programs, partnerships were well-established and embedded into the organizations' culture, while 43 percent of programs had limited collaborative relationships, were in the process of developing partnerships when being reviewed, or only had the director or advisor involved in outside connections. Review Teams found no evidence of collaborations with key partners in only three percent of programs. Notably, 51 percent of programs demonstrated ways in which the program's collaborations have resulted in increased options for students in postsecondary education, training, and employment. In

an additional 20 percent of reviewed programs, these opportunities were promoted to students in only some classes, or options were not aligned with the regional employment needs identified in the Local Plan.

ACLS found that at least some adult education staff at 25 of the 35 programs appeared to be aware of the program's WIOA collaborations, although teachers were aware of their role in these collaborations in only 10 of the 25 programs. In 18 programs, students were able to identify local partners and opportunities for further education and employment, although in 6 of these programs, students' knowledge varied by class type or site (for multisite programs).

Teachers in 8 of the 35 programs effectively and systematically included student career pathways into their instruction. Additionally, teachers in 14 other programs embed students' career pathways into their instruction; however, these appeared to be individual efforts rather than a coordinated and systematic approach, or they were directed only at higher level classes.

Thirty-four percent of the 35 programs demonstrated established systems for shared customers, and an additional 31 percent showed progress in this area. Other programs had formalized processes for sharing and documenting referrals and collaborations. Six percent of programs had connections with education and career options within the agency but offered no evidence of connecting students to external workforce and education partners.

Overall, 3 percent of programs were rated *Exemplary* in *Career Pathways Collaborations*, 29 percent were rated *Proficient*, 57 percent were rated as *Developing*, and 11 percent demonstrated *Limited Evidence* of *Career Pathways Collaborations*.

Career Pathways Collaborations: Overall Promising Practices

- The program supports career pathways as outlined in Massachusetts' State Plan for a seamless education and workforce services system, while effective collaboration with local education and workforce systems is embedded into the program's culture. Interview respondents shared that an effective process is now in place for the identification, referral, and tracking of shared customers.¹
- Leadership has a clearly defined mission and role in helping students identify and progress along career pathways that is shared with local partners and program staff. Teachers and advisors have a common understanding of support systems and career interests of students to set education

¹ A *shared customer* is a student who is enrolled in more than one core partner program at any time during a fiscal year (i.e., a student who is co-enrolled and a student who is sequentially enrolled). Examples of shared customers who enroll in more than one core partner program include but are not limited to: ABE/ESOL students enrolled by OSCC and receiving career center services leading to employment, ABE/ESOL students ages 16-24 and enrolled in Title I out-of-school youth programs, ABE/ESOL students and recipients of Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and/or Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) services, ABE/ESOL students who exit ABE services and then enroll in a training program funded by a core partner.

and career goals and training and work opportunities both within the program and the larger community.

- Program leaders have gained a full awareness of the WIOA Local Plan and associated employment needs identified in the Local Plan. The organization offers programs in some of the region's highest needs sectors.
- The program is a highly respected partner and has been responsive to local needs. It has an effective system in place for the identification and referral of shared customers. For example, the outstationing coordinator at MassHire refers people to the advisors at the program, which prioritizes their placement.
- Students in the program could articulate their education and career options and identify specific ways in which the program has helped them pursue these options.
- Teachers shared ways in which they connect their instructional lessons and topic areas to students' career interests. ABE teachers detailed units connected to specific career areas.
- The program has a well-developed and cohesive system for identifying and serving shared customers. The outstationing coordinator at the MassHire Career Center, whose role is to refer students to both local adult education programs and further educational and career training options, is also one of the program's teachers.
- Graduates have gone on to pursue careers in paths that address regional employment needs identified in the Local Plan.
- Teachers shared ways they connect their instructional lessons and topic areas to students' career interests. Program advisors also visit classrooms to support students looking to gain employment and to introduce them to a range of career options matched to their interests.
- Program staff spoke in very similar terms about priority industries, shared customers, the program's referral system, local partnerships, and how these partnerships help students advance to their next steps. Interviews indicated that teachers are aware of the program's partnerships and the successes of students who have graduated.
- The program has their outstationing coordinator work closely with colleagues from MassHire and other core partners in the referral and intake process. Staff members described a new electronic referral form they are now using, which they believe has resulted in an improved system that is far easier to identify, refer, and track shared customers.

Career Pathway Collaborations: Overall Areas for Improvement

More than two-thirds of the programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021 do not have a systematic approach to increasing options for students in postsecondary education, training and employment leading to family sustaining wages:

- The Review Team did not see evidence that program staff at any level understand that ACLS provides funding for advisor positions as part of ABE/ESOL services in order to enable programs to fulfill the federal requirement that funded ABE programs participate in planning with MassHire Workforce Boards and collaborate with workforce partners to enhance career pathways for students.

- During interviews, students were not able to identify career goals or pathways and were not aware of education and employment options. In fact, students specifically mentioned that they would like more help from the program with accessing job training programs.
- The program did not provide evidence that it has a formal, documented system in place for making or receiving referrals from WIOA partners that the program could utilize to follow up on student progress on career paths after leaving the program.
- Although teachers appeared somewhat aware of their students' career interests, they did not clearly articulate how those interests are consistently connected to classroom instruction. Further, teachers did not seem fully aware of the program's role within the larger workforce system.
- During interviews, program leaders, teachers, and advisor all struggled to share specific examples of how these or other local collaborations have resulted in greater exposure and new opportunities for their students or helped advance them along their career pathways.
- There were few indications of a cohesive advising program, as the two different class types delineated some partnerships, procedures, and timelines for supporting students on their career pathways that did not align with each other.
- While the program's relationship with core partners is perceived as positive and beneficial, the program did not share a formalized process or a clearly documented system for identifying, referring, or tracking shared customers.
- While some staff, including program advisors, are aware of community resources and program partners, others did not present evidence they have a shared understanding of their role in collaborating with local education and workforce systems.
- Most students were able to articulate their education and career goals. However, interviews with day and evening students provided limited evidence that students are aware of educational and training programs available to them upon graduation.
- While there is some attention to work readiness skills in classes, the Review Team found little evidence of teacher integration of student career interests into the curriculum, and little teacher awareness of their students' career interests.
- The program's collaboration with local partners is limited to the program director.
- Several students, especially those taking ESOL classes, could not identify anyone in the program who has helped them learn about career options. Furthermore, ABE students shared mixed responses about who they can talk to about college, job training, and other next steps.
- When students were asked about education and training programs, they could not name any specific education or training program. The program does have a Careers unit as part of the curriculum, but it is unclear if any introduction to careers or next steps are shared with students prior to the unit.

INDICATOR 4: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

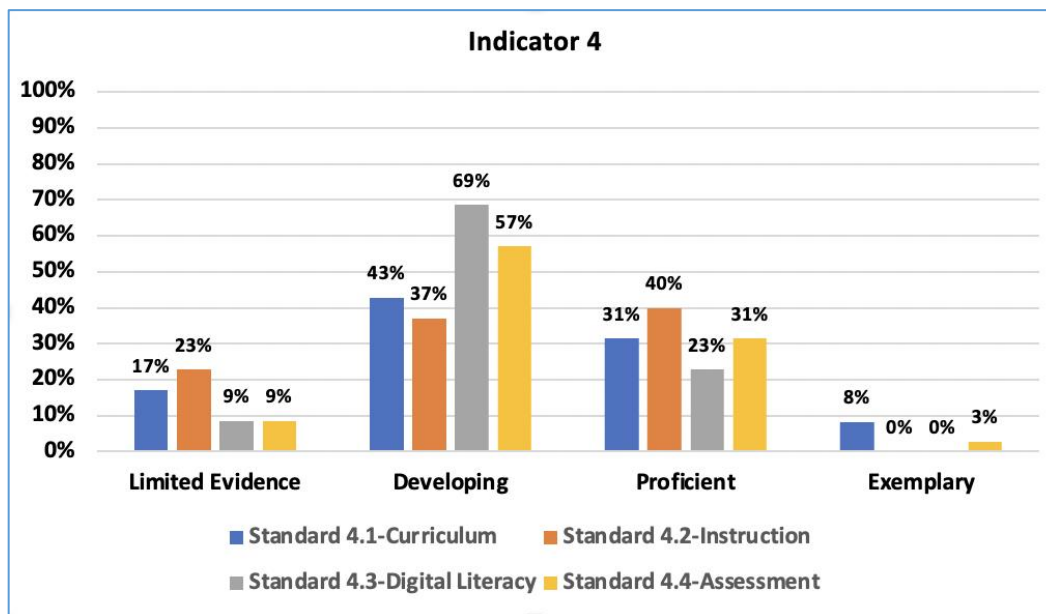
The program delivers high quality standards-based instruction that meets the academic needs of all students.

ACLS analyzed interview responses, classroom instruction, lesson plans, and curricular materials to determine each program's ratings for Indicator 4. ACLS looked for evidence in the four standards of this Indicator:

- Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE) and the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency States (MA ELPS).²
- Instruction is based on research and evidence-based practices and high expectations for all students.
- Digital literacy enhances curriculum and instruction.
- Formative and summative assessments are used to evaluate and modify instruction.

As per the ACLS Fiscal Year 2021 *Program Quality Review Protocol*, Indicator 4 is rated at both indicator level and standard level. Figure 5 below shows the Indicator 4 standard rating percentages for the 35 programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021.

Figure 5



² The Massachusetts ESOL Frameworks have been replaced with the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Standards (MA ELPS) in April 2019. The MA ELPS integrate standards from the MA ESOL Frameworks (2005), the CCRSAE, and the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education (2016).

Indicator 4 Synopsis

Eleven of the 35 programs received an overall rating of *Proficient* for Indicator 4-Curriculum and Instruction, while 18 programs were rated as *Developing*, and 6 were rated as providing *Limited Evidence*. In 40 percent of the reviewed programs, curriculum and scope and sequence documents were complete and aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRSAE) or the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Standards (MA ELPS). In general, ACLS found inconsistent evidence that research-based instructional strategies (*scaffolding, differentiated instruction, checking for understanding, student engagement*) are used consistently in classrooms. Overall, most programs had access to up-to-date technology and incorporated remote learning by necessity in Fiscal Year 2021. Although many students were newly taught through online formats, many programs struggled to provide full integration of digital literacy instructional strategies. There is evidence that formative and summative assessments effectively supported instruction in 34 percent of programs.

Indicator 4 Data Analysis

The majority of the programs reviewed submitted curriculum scope and sequences/curriculum units, with 3 of the 35 programs rated *Exemplary* and 11 programs rated *Proficient* in Standard 4.1-*Curriculum Aligned to Standards*. Eighty-three percent of the programs submitted curriculum scope and sequences/curriculum units that were mostly or partially aligned to the CCRSAE and/or the MA ELPS (depending on services offered by each program). Assessment, entry/exit criteria, and digital literacy were the most common missing curricular elements. However, 17 percent of programs visited in Fiscal Year 2021 provided either no scope and sequence materials or minimal documents that demonstrated *Limited Evidence* of having developed curricula, and these were not aligned to required standards. In 43 percent of the programs reviewed, staff articulated how the curriculum was implemented in the classroom instruction and the underlying research on which scope and sequence materials were based, and staff in another 40 percent of programs detailed partial understanding or knowledge that differed by class type (i.e., ABE or ESOL).

The ratings for Standard 4.2-*Instruction* were informed by evidence collected from staff and student interview responses, class observations, and curriculum document review. Fourteen of the 35 programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021 received a rating of *Proficient* for Standard 4.2, 13 were rated *Developing*, and 8 were rated as having demonstrated *Limited Evidence*. Staff in 43 percent of the reviewed programs effectively detailed research and evidence-based practices that guided instruction. In examining the specific instructional look-fors—*scaffolding, differentiated instruction, checking for understanding, and student engagement*—the Review Team found wide variation among practices and between programs. Classroom observations detailing *Exemplary* and *Proficient* practices exceeded those rated *Developing* and *Limited Evidence* in 13 of the 35 reviewed programs with regard to *scaffolding*. Reviewers found that higher rated examples of *differentiated instruction* were more prevalent than those rated *Developing* and *Limited Evidence* in seven programs. In *checking for understanding*, instruction in 10 programs was rated *Exemplary* and *Proficient* more often than the lower rankings. For *student engagement*, 10 of the 35 programs received more higher-level than lower-level ratings.

Regarding Standard 4.3-*Digital Literacy*, ACLS defines digital literacy as the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information. While some programs had made digital literacy a focus prior to COVID-19, virtually all of the reviewed programs reported making significant instructional changes in response to the sudden need to implement remote instruction. At the time of their PQR, 83 percent of programs offered solely remote learning, mostly using the Zoom platform, 6 percent provided a combination of remote and hybrid or onsite classes, and 11 percent offered only onsite classes (early in the pandemic) or held no classes at all, choosing instead to deliver packets of materials directly to students; all observations were conducted remotely. Students in all classes had the opportunity to use technology regularly in 32 of the 35 reviewed programs, unsurprising given the remote nature of most instruction. Eight programs were rated *Proficient* for *Digital Literacy*; in these programs, technology was used purposefully in order to both facilitated learning and foster students' digital literacy. In contrast, 24 programs received a rating of *Developing* and the other 3 were rated *Limited Evidence* for this standard because, while remote learning platforms may have been central to instruction, technology was not used in a systematic way to build digital literacy skills or enhance learning. Digital literacy was consistently taught in 9 programs and to some classes or students in 20 other programs. Digital literacy activities were at least partially integrated into curriculum and instruction in 26 of the reviewed programs.

Based on classroom observations, interview responses, and a review of submitted curricular material, ACLS found that 3 percent of programs demonstrated effective use of formative and summative assessments to a level that warranted a rating of *Exemplary*, and 31 percent of programs were rated *Proficient* in Indicator 4.4-*Assessment*. Fifty-seven percent of programs received a rating of *Developing* for this standard, while 9 percent were rated as having provided *Limited Evidence* of effective assessments in the classroom instruction and/or curricular materials, as well as limited use of assessment results to modify instruction, identify student learning needs, and determine appropriate student interventions.

Standard 4.1-Curriculum Aligned to Standards

Curriculum: Overall Promising Practices

- Overall, the Review Team determined that the curriculum was thoughtfully developed and that all levels and strands of both ESOL and ABE ELA feature topics that are relevant to adult learners' interests and needs. The unit plans are clearly derived from the scope and sequence and address key priority standards. They include meaningful essential questions, pertinent and authentic resources, activities that students can apply to their daily lives, and appropriate assessment strategies.
- To more fully incorporate practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the curriculum, the program added standards for civics and navigating systems. The resulting scope and sequence documents also include digital skills that identify practices for both remote and in-person learning, relevant math skills, and benchmarks for students completing each level.

- The ABE curriculum documents state that teachers are supplied with a copy of the scope and sequence for all levels, to understand what is expected of students at all levels and ensure smooth transitions between levels.
- A review of required and submitted curriculum materials found that the expected unit plans paid appropriate attention to assessments and digital literacy. Staff have been standardizing instruction by deepening their familiarity with scaffolding and differentiation in the current remote teaching environment.
- During interviews, respondents spoke about spending substantial time at staff meetings working on content-related curriculum organized by both discipline and level. They have also benefitted from learning about what their peers are doing which has further strengthened their curriculum integration across multiple content areas.
- Coherence across ABE content areas and levels provide clear evidence of attention to the key instructional shifts of the CCRSAE in its development and documentation.

Curriculum: Overall Areas for Improvement

- In the curricular materials submitted for review prior to the PQR, the Review Team found no evidence of alignment with the CCRSAE ELA content standards, the CCRSAE Standards of Mathematical Practice or the CCRSAE Standards for Mathematical Content, and no evidence of the CCRSAE key instructional shifts in ELA or math.
- In both the leadership and teachers' interviews, the Review Team heard that the program relies on the primary textbook to ensure that the CCRSAE standards and the MA ELPS are addressed. Only one teacher described using the MA ELPS in designing her classes. Another teacher said that he uses the "Common Core standards", which are K-12 standards.
- Materials submitted for the ESOL curriculum were only crosswalks between a textbook series for adult education and the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Standards (MA ELPS), which were created by the publisher. The math curriculum document contained a list of topics and vocabulary that was not complete and not aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS AE). Neither document provided the additional information that is expected in a scope and sequence, such as: units, approximate time frame for each unit, purpose of each unit, learning objectives, activities, assessments, materials and resources, and digital literacy integration.
- All submitted curriculum materials were incomplete and not fully aligned to the funded class levels.
- The ESOL curriculum lacks coherence across content areas and levels, lacks rigor and a clear alignment to digital literacy, and has very little mention of assessment tools. The ABE curriculum appears to lack reference to GLE/NRS levels and a statement of exit criteria.
- Although the scope and sequence plans show alignment to the CCRSAE and MA ABE Framework standards, the documents lack an explicit digital literacy component that is integrated across all levels. Also, although assessment is implied and sometimes included in the goals and outcomes section of the scope and sequence documents, because it is not a clearly delineated component

of those documents, the Review Team found it difficult to distinguish between expected outcomes and the process for determining whether those outcomes have been met.

- Math lessons and units are not yet fully complete, and similarly, work on the ELA curriculum map has begun but has not yet been completed.
- Some curriculum materials reflect an excellent incorporation of rigor as defined in the standards. Other curricula do not appear to be complete as no exit/entry criteria are defined and assessments are not explicit. As an example, one math scope and sequence document does not include assignments or projects given to students, materials used, or assessment tools and strategies.

Standard 4.2-Instruction

Instruction: Overall Promising Practices

- The program holds monthly study circles where staff meet to discuss ways of using research to improve their practice. The topics change annually—this year digital learning and technology, last year math, two years ago ELA.
- In interviews, the director reported that the program ensures instruction is based on research and evidence-based practices by requiring annual Professional Growth Plans which include professional development and the expectation that teachers will employ research-based instruction and evidence-based practices.
- Program interviewees were able to articulate research-based practices used in their instruction such as: incorporating aspects of differentiated instruction and evidence-based reading instruction reflected throughout their curriculum; implementing STAR techniques; and engaging with current research in fields, including that of brain science, vocabulary, and universal design.
- When addressing current research and evidence-based practices, the program director grounded the program’s learning culture in that of Vygotsky’s student-centered learning where the teacher serves as facilitator. Using the concept of Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development” she supports teachers in planning instruction that is “just above where the students are” to ensure productive struggle. She additionally discussed Stephen Krashen’s *Theory of Second Language Acquisition* and described the need for “meaningful interaction, not drill and kill” and Malcom Knowles’ *Theory of Andragogy* saying that students know what they want to learn and be responsible learners, when setting the context for the academic vision of the program.
- To ensure that all students master rigorous material, the director explained how the program was not textbook based, but rather utilizes authentic materials, such as articles from the *Change Agent*, newspaper articles, children’s story books, and local bus schedules—the types of materials that learners are most likely to encounter in their daily lives. Teachers provide scaffolding to learners so they can access these authentic materials.
- Teachers noted that program-wide professional development (PD) is directly tied to strengthening teaching and learning, including recent focus on differentiated instruction and formative assessment.

Scaffolding

- Teachers directed incorrect responses to previous learning and allowed students to self-correct in conversation and draw their own conclusions; had previously prepared students to know how to work effectively in groups and have sustained discussions; allowed students to struggle productively while practicing English; recapped the lesson and contextualized it into students' daily lives (ex. talking about *why* adjectives are used and not just *how* to use them); provided clear guidelines for activities; made use of level-appropriate and relevant reading materials with academic vocabulary (ex. short passage on MLK); elicited prior knowledge and then showed pictures (ex. from Jim Crow era) which elicited more responses; and posed questions and asked for clarification (ex. "What questions could you ask that have to do with activities?").
- The teacher provided sufficient support before gradually releasing responsibility for activity to students, and students helped each other and used discussion, demonstration, and multimedia to share their ideas.
- Teachers gave clear instructions, prepared tiered activities to allow students an increasingly active role in learning, and incorporated instructional routines with which students were familiar.
- The teacher incorporated multiple means of representation into the lesson plan, deliberately grouped students into breakout rooms by level, and encouraged students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.
- In one class the teacher was very deliberate about providing scaffolds; as students verbally solved math problems, often in their heads, the teacher was deliberate about articulating the thinking steps and writing down the explicit steps the students skipped over, laying a foundational habit that will become important when the fractions become too difficult to manipulate mentally.

Differentiated Instruction

- Teachers used various classroom activities and presentation of content designed to meet students' educational needs; the teachers effectively moved back and forth from group to individual student work; and technology was well used as a tool to differentiate teaching.
- The lesson activity used tangible items and manipulatives to model a problem physically, followed by the use of formulas to solve the same problem mathematically; the lesson plan included options for further exploration for students; and there was a nice balance of a student-led problem-solving activity and the teacher helping when needed.
- The teacher provided extra assistance, coaching, prompts, and explanations for students who were having trouble following the instructions, and the lesson plan included additional tasks for students who complete their assigned task early and allowed them to move through the tasks at their own speed.
- Instruction was differentiated in process, teachers provided appropriate opportunities to struggle productively, and group formation in breakout rooms was organized according to student level and need.

- The teacher incorporated differentiated instruction between more and less advanced students into a lesson plan on reading medical prescriptions.

Checking for Understanding

- The teacher asked follow-up questions, checking in periodically for follow-up, and giving a homework assignment to reinforce the lesson. Students were observed checking in with each other for peer support.
- Teachers checked for understanding by asking questions throughout the lesson, and when students were confused, the instruction was revised to provide more information; students had multiple opportunities to practice constructing questions.
- In one class, the teacher restated and validated students' comments. In the other, the teacher moved through the room checking on the accuracy of students' written work. Both lesson plans included exit tickets and culminating activities.
- Teachers used frequent on-the-spot assessments to gauge student understanding, provided feedback that encouraged students to reflect on their own learning, and got students to volunteer answers without having to call on them individually.
- Lesson plans indicated that evidence of learning would include informal 1:1 and group discussions, student graphic organizers, student drafts, teacher observation, exit tickets, post-assessment reflection, and assessment of final products using a rubric.

Student Engagement

- The pacing of the lessons was appropriate for a remote learning environment, teachers used a variety of tools (such as chat and polling) to facilitate active participation, teachers provided wait time to allow responses from all students, and materials and content were relevant and interesting to the learners.
- Students were given the opportunity to relate what they were learning to their own lives and were actively engaged in asking and answering questions in their breakout rooms on Zoom.
- The teacher structured class so that all students consistently participated in discussions orally and through chat in the whole group and questioned each other in breakout rooms.
- Students had enough time to complete tasks and ask questions; wait time was utilized to allow time for everyone to respond in the chat before anyone clicked on "send" to share their responses with the entire class; and all students were actively engaged, producing language, and engaging one another in conversation using materials relevant to adult learners.
- The teacher called on students to participate by name and was very attuned to what was going on with each student. For example, when a student turned off her camera, the teacher immediately asked her if she could come back on, which the student immediately did without objection.

Instruction: Overall Areas for Improvement

- Program staff did not clearly articulate how research and evidence-based practices are incorporated into instruction and how they ensure that all students can master rigorous

material.

- The Review Team noted that in some classes the lessons were insufficiently rigorous for the SPL level being addressed and wondered whether the program is leveling students accurately.
- While teachers provided several examples of effective instructional practices that they had used in the past, they also acknowledged challenges in applying these strategies in the recent transition to remote learning. Specifically, they noted struggling to check for understanding and differentiated instruction. Many teachers were learning Zoom at the same time they conducted class and taught students to negotiate the technology.
- Program leaders were unable to provide direct examples of research and evidence-based practices that guide ABE instruction. Teachers reported using the results from STAR training and testing, Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE), Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DAR), and the Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Test (MAPT) to identify students' levels but offered no specifics of how this information is applied to teaching.
- Program leaders mentioned the need to understand what best practices are, but the only examples provided related to emotional support.
- Classroom observations noted some concerns with how the program ensures appropriate rigor, student engagement, and effective checking for student understanding for each class.
- Teachers did not clearly connect the various practices or activities to a larger framework or theory of learning that would indicate a more strategic approach to instruction.
- Some teachers could articulate using research and evidence-based practices in their classrooms, such as using STAR techniques in lessons and teaching approaches. However, overall, respondents struggled to share clear examples; responses were overly general, with few examples of how research and evidence-based practices are incorporated into instruction and how all students can master rigorous material.

Differentiated Instruction

- There was mostly a reliance on whole-class instruction with little to no differentiation in either content, process, or classroom materials. In some classrooms, there was no evidence during the observation period of attention to students varied educational and developmental needs.
- Teacher-talk dominated the lesson. In one class the entire lesson consisted of rote textbook activities.
- There were no opportunities for student choice or variety in the content they were learning, the process they used to learn, nor the product used to demonstrate understanding to meet the variety of learning needs, styles, and levels in the classroom.
- The absence of group work or student pairing also did not encourage differentiation in either content, process, or classroom materials. Observers also noted that while the classroom topic areas seemed appropriate and timely, the delivery was unclear and confusing, especially for students at varying skill levels.
- All students were presented with the same content and activities in both the whole class and breakout rooms.

- Teachers asked if students understood, sometimes with questions directed at individual students, but did not provide additional support for those who struggled to understand; students did not engage with each other.
- Other than teachers calling on individual students, observers found no evidence of differentiation during the observation periods or in accompanying lesson plans.

Checking for Understanding

- Teacher interactions with students did not effectively ascertain whether the students had actually learned the material. For example, as a teacher reviewed the previous lesson, she asked a student whether s/he understood, but when the student replied that it was hard, the teacher simply repeated the definition, rather than engaging the student in order to understand what the student found hard.
- Teachers or tutors did not allow enough wait time for learners to respond to questions, but rather moved on after one or two “Yes” responses.
- Teachers either rarely or infrequently checked for understanding and or/provided feedback that was corrective only and did not invite students to reflect on their thinking or apply a strategy in order to revise incorrect answers.
- Teachers did not check on students’ understanding in some cases or did not react to student responses (e.g., thumbs down).
- There was no evidence observed of confirming student learning or of opportunities for students to reflect on their own and each other’s reasoning or of comparing their thinking to that of others was seen during the observation period.
- There was no observed modification of instruction based on formative assessment was evident. While teachers did ask general questions such as, “does everybody understand,” they provided limited time or attention to the students who did not respond to the probe.
- While teachers at times stopped at the end of classroom activity and asked if there were any questions, not enough time or attention was provided to the students who expressed confusion.

Student Engagement

- Observers did not witness any student-to-student interaction or collaboration; in some classes, most students had their camera off and were muted for the entire observation period; there was no evidence of collaborative problem solving or students holding each other accountable; and teachers did not always use wait time effectively, and, in some cases, the lesson's pacing appeared too fast for most students to keep up.
- Teachers did not select materials that were relevant and engaging to adult learners, did not create ample opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking and productive struggle, and did not allow enough wait time to allow all students to respond.
- The lessons only supported one active student at a time; while most were compliant, they did not actively participate, and teachers did not provide any whole-class activities.

- In observations and lesson plans, there was little evidence of opportunities for students to actively participate or interact with the lesson or with each other.
- Some classes were characterized by mostly teacher talk, mostly teacher-student interaction, and little to no student-to student interaction. Materials did not appear engaging. It was clear not all students were engaged during various discussions.
- Many students had their video turned off with no interaction observed with those students.
- In some cases, students were not given adequate time to formulate responses; only a few students were called on; those who struggled most did not actively participate.

Standard 4.3-Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy: Overall Promising Practices

- In Fiscal Year 2021, programs were proactive in shifting to primarily online remote learning. Students in nearly all programs had opportunities to routinely use technology for learning activities, with the exception of programs offered in correctional facilities, which have strict regulations concerning online access. In response to students' need for technology necessary to access online learning, 27 of the 31 programs offering online learning lent out devices to students (primarily Chromebooks, some with laptops and tablets). PQR reports specifically note that seven programs provided mobile internet hotspots. As well, Tech Goes Home (TGH), operating in Greater Boston, has partnered with nine of the programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021; participating students enroll in TGH digital literacy classes and receive a Chromebook or tablet at the end of the course.
- While programs have faced substantial challenges in the move to online learning, the Review Team found evidence that programs with increased use of technology and incorporation of digital literacy activities will positively influence teaching and learning moving forward. In one program, for example:
 - Staff shared some hope that the most promising models will continue post-COVID-19, with some suggesting that remote learning is intentionally and effectively using technology to build students' digital literacy skills and enhance learning.
- In some programs, technology is used to complete an array of assignments designed to build students' digital literacy skills and enhance learning. For example:
 - Teachers and students shared ways in which students routinely use technology now to find and communicate information, such as: sharing homework with teachers; producing and uploading portfolios of their work using PowerPoint; writing essays on the computer; creating presentations containing videos to share during class; and, understanding what a URL is, whether it is secure, and evaluating information based on the source of data.
 - Teachers reported that every unit ends with a final project that often requires the use of technology and presentation. For example, in the Health and Wellness unit, each student had to make a final project with a presentation on Google Slides to summarize what they had learned on their topic.

- Students described using computers for watching videos, using Khan Academy, reading articles, writing papers using Google Docs, and doing research or projects using technology tools.
- Staff and students described how technology is routinely used to find and communicate information: uploading assignments into Blackboard; email and follow-up/communication between students and teachers; higher level ELA students writing projects at the end of units; writing essays on the computer; and researching topics on the internet and evaluating information from the internet based on the reliability of the source of information.
- One teacher reported using Google Docs and Google Slides, so that each student can work on their own assignment, and so that the teacher could provide feedback by making comments on the same document.
- Digital literacy is embedded in all levels of instruction, and students confirmed that they have been utilizing Google Classroom to submit homework assignments and give presentations.
- Programs help students increase access to technology and digital literacy skills. For example:
 - The program has identified a "tech support team" to help both students and staff shift to digital learning.
 - The program developed a digital literacy skills guide which was compiled by the digital literacy skills coordinator to identify skills that students will learn and master over different class levels.
 - After shifting to remote learning, staff discovered that many students didn't have computers, so they successfully used public and private funds to obtain 76 computers for their students. In the beginning of the year, students were able to come to the program in person to receive support with using their computer and Zoom and accessing email.
 - Students are asked to complete an orientation assignment in Google Classroom that tests their comfort level in navigating the Google Classroom environment. Furthermore, students who are not comfortable with the technology have the option of being paired with a career developer or another student for assistance with technology to avoid becoming overwhelmed.
 - Every class has a technology co-teacher in their class for an hour each week to support student acquisition of digital learning skills.
 - Since moving to remote learning, the program developed a digital navigator system and deployed volunteers, many of whom speak the first languages of students, to help classes and individual students learn effectively online.

Digital Literacy: Overall Areas for Improvement

- Despite being well-equipped with up-to-date computers and other technological tools and teaching remotely, many programs do not have a systematic approach to ensuring technology is consistently used to build all students' digital literacy skills and to enhance learning.

- Many teachers struggle with technology; although learning is remote, few features of online learning platforms are employed, or opportunities for students to use digital tools is limited. For example:
 - In some classes, teachers either did not share their screens, struggled to share in a way that was visible to students, or did not show or provide materials for students who lacked hard copies.
 - Some students shared that their teachers struggle with technology and encouraged more training to bring staff to proficiency. Others mentioned hardly ever using technology in the classroom other than what is required to attend the lesson during remote instruction.
 - Although several lessons appeared to be designed for students to use technological tools, such as interactive whiteboards, teachers did the typing and controlled the use of technology. Classroom observations and lesson plans did not show evidence that students took control or led activities on digital platforms.
 - It was noted during class observations that teachers' comfort levels and proficiency with remote technology varied widely. In some cases, the teachers had difficulty connecting to the class.
 - Some teachers had not yet mastered strategies for assuring that all students were engaged, checking their understanding, tailoring instruction to students' strengths and needs, or adapting lessons when students were confused.
- Technology is not effectively used for the purpose of developing students' digital literacy skills or to enhance learning. For example:
 - The Review Team found little evidence that activities to develop digital literacy are consistently employed in all levels. No application of technology was witnessed in any of the classes observed or in the lesson plans provided.
 - Neither staff nor students indicated any way in which technology was used to complete projects or enhance students' digital literacy. The Review Team found no evidence that digital literacy was incorporated into curriculum or lesson plans or that it was a focus of instruction.
 - Most of the examples of technology use, such as IXL, Khan Academy, KET, and CK12 represented the use of computer-assisted instruction rather than the development of digital literacy skills.
 - Lesson plans and curriculum were missing a digital literacy component, indicating that digital literacy instruction and skills have not been intentionally designed for each level.
 - During classroom observations, the Review Team noted inconsistent evidence and quality for how instructors were using digital literacy to enhance their curriculum and instructional strategies.
 - In some classes, there was no evidence of breakout room use during the observation periods or in the lesson plans, students followed along in their (physical) textbooks, and only the teachers were actively engaged with such features as the whiteboard.

- Explanations of ways teachers are now elevating students' digital literacy skills were inconsistent across the program, and students provided a very limited response as to what technology they use in class to help them learn.

Standard 4.4-Assessment

Assessment: Overall Promising Practices

- Programs have a systematic approach to assessment. For example:
 - Several teachers gave multiple and varied examples of formative assessments used in class, including exit tickets, journal entries, problem-solving activities, open-ended questions, projects, debates, cooperative learning activities, listening to students read, and comprehension questioning.
 - Program staff report using summative assessments such as MAPT scores to make informed decisions around students' placement into appropriate levels, and to help identify where extra support is needed and tutors are assigned. Pre- and post-tests are given for every curriculum unit with answers recorded in a spreadsheet to make it easier to assess individual student growth.
 - The Review Team viewed some strong examples of checking for understanding during classroom observations and heard teachers reassure their struggling students that they would provide additional time to them 1:1 or to the entire class as necessary.
 - Students agreed that their teachers give regular and helpful feedback on their completed assignments. As an example, one student mentioned writing an essay in Google Docs, and then, after it was submitted, the teacher would mark it up and send it back. Another student confirmed that after they take a test their teacher would talk with them about how they did, give them more practice, and arrange a time to provide more assistance.
 - In reviewing the curriculum, the Review Team noted that the assessments described in the curriculum documents are often demonstration or project-based, and the Math curriculum includes exit tickets in each lesson.
 - Teachers explained how they use formative assessment to gauge student understanding. One teacher shared that she adjusts her classes based on how well students can use the grammar she taught them; if students have trouble with the grammar, she assigns extra guided practice, but if students demonstrate understanding, she uses “a more creative way to use the grammar to ask questions about the topic.”
 - Teachers reported using summative assessments, including TABE, to assess how much students have progressed since the previous test administration. Teachers said using these data helps them modify their instruction and provide opportunities for students who need extra help. As an example, the program added phonics reading and writing skills based on student need as determined by the assessments.

Assessment: Overall Areas for Improvement

- Formative and summative assessment is limited in scope, is not systematic, and only occasionally relies on the analysis of results to inform and modify instruction. For example:
 - The Review Team did not see clear and consistent evidence that teachers are using formative assessments, or that summative assessments are used to inform and modify instruction.
 - The program director reported that she has not yet had the opportunity to use assessment data because of assessment issues when she started.
 - From reviewing lesson plans, curricular documents, and classroom observations, the Review Team found that the use of assessments to inform teachers' instruction was uneven, inconsistent, and in some instances non-existent. Further, there was little evidence that the program intentionally uses summative assessments, including NRS assessments, to evaluate and modify their instruction with the goal of increasing student outcomes.
 - Staff were unable to give examples of how they use assessment results to inform and modify their instruction or increase the effectiveness of instruction.
 - Although assessments are occurring, the ways in which these data are used to inform and modify instruction does not appear to be happening consistently. Respondents struggled to provide examples of this occurring, especially on a systemwide basis.
 - The Review Team found some discrepancies concerning how formal assessments are administered and how assessment informs programmatic and instructional decisions. It was apparent that teachers utilize assessment strategies in classes, but the Review Team found little evidence to verify a systematic approach to assessment across the adult education program.
 - When asked about assessment, other teachers generally discussed instructional strategies, such as graphic organizers and inferencing, without indicating how any information they gleaned informed instruction.
 - The Review Team found no evidence of a program-wide approach to assessment, a procedure for reviewing assessment results, or evidence of how these results may inform instruction with a goal of increasing student outcomes.

INDICATOR 7: ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

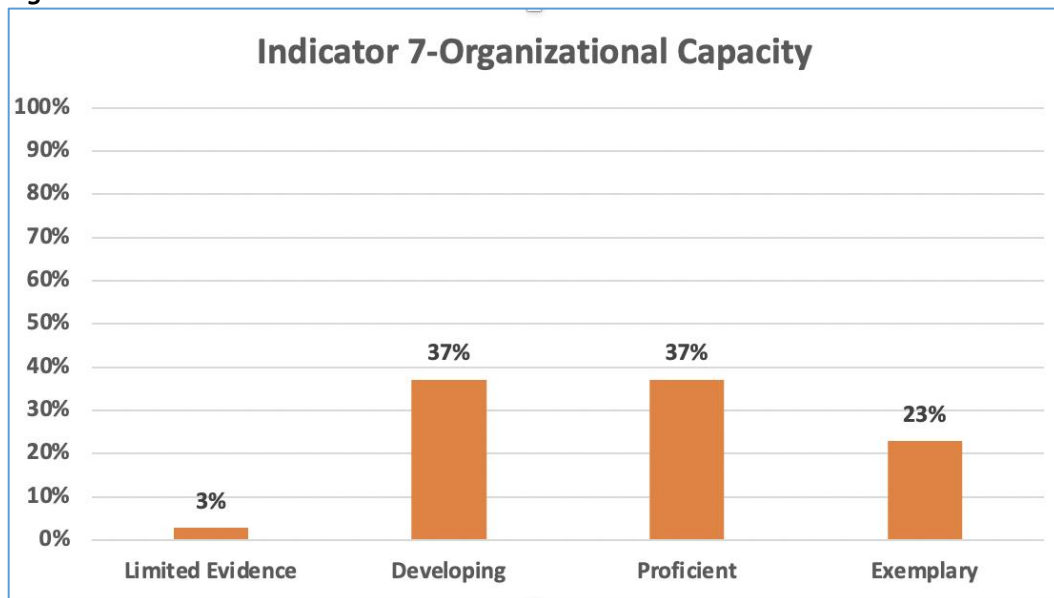
The agency/institution (e.g., Community Based Organization, Local Education Agency, Community College, and Correctional Institution) actively builds and supports the capacity of the program and maintains quality working conditions to ensure its success.

ACLS analyzed interview responses, descriptions of programs' physical space, and program leaders' job descriptions to determine each site's overall rating for Indicator 7. ACLS looked for evidence in the five standards of this Indicator as follows:

- The program operates at a site that meets all city, state, and federal accessibility and safety requirements.
- The program provides regionally competitive salaries, benefits, and opportunities for full-time employment. In addition, the program compensates all job responsibilities including paid prep time for teachers.
- The program provides career growth opportunities and rewards experience, education, and/or licensure.
- The program has organizational leadership that established minimum qualifications and maintains high standards for program leadership. The agency/institution provides in-depth training and on-going support to staff in leadership roles, including acting or interim staff.
- The program has classrooms that are suitable for adults and is conducive to learning, dedicated advising space that is private and secure, and up to date technology that is readily available for all staff and students.

Figure 6 below shows the rating percentages for Indicator 7-Organizational Capacity for the 35 programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021.

Figure 6



Indicator 7 Synopsis

Indicator 7 illustrates that 60 percent of programs were rated Exemplary or Proficient and 40 percent were rated Developing or Limited Evidence. Although most programs provided clean and adequate facilities, the quality of spaces and resources were challenging in a few programs, and there was evidence of inequities across sites in some organizations. Other programs showed limited on-going educational support for the adult education program leadership from the parent agency/institution.

Indicator 7 Data Analysis

Due to the remote nature of PQRs in Fiscal Year 2021, Review Teams were unable to visit program sites; ratings concerning the safety and accessibility of programs were extrapolated from interview data. The eight programs rated *Exemplary* were characterized by safe and accessible environments, favorable working conditions for staff, high standards for leadership, strong agency support for the program and its leaders, and sufficient resources for staff and students. The majority of the 35 programs visited in Fiscal Year 2021 were reported to be safe and accessible with classrooms that were clean, appropriate for adult learners, and conducive to learning. However, four programs reported that facilities required improvements or renovations, including two multisite programs. Quality resources were available in most programs, including substantial upgrades in technology necessary for virtual instruction, and 87 percent of the programs offering online classes lent computers or tablets to students. Program leaders in all 35 reviewed programs have the required qualifications to serve as educational leaders per ACLS policies.

All of the programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021 compensate staff for professional development activities, meetings, and lesson preparation at a salary rate that meets or exceeds the minimum stipulated by ACLS policies. However, staff in 5 of the 35 programs reported some differential working conditions by site or class type, high turnover among some staff categories, or not being fully compensated for additional preparation required for teaching during COVID-19. In 80 percent of the programs, adult education leaders receive ongoing support from their parent agency or institution relating to their role specifically as a leader of an educational program.

Organizational Capacity: Overall Promising Practices

- Safety has taken on a new meaning for the program since COVID. Following an early exposure in the building, the organization contracted with a hazmat company, who treated the building and HVAC system. While classes are remote, the organization has strict procedures for partial use, and detailed plans and protocols for a future return to the building when it is deemed safe.
- Until shifting to virtual classrooms, the program provided a robust orientation program, where safety measures and procedures were discussed with students and shared through student handbooks. One teacher described these orientation sessions as an opportunity to review rules for each new class while emphasizing mutual respect, sharing opinions and concerns, and safety issues. Advisors also meet with students after orientations to reinforce rules and expectations.
- Safety procedures are covered during student orientation and documented in a student handbook. Some teachers have adapted the handbook for their students' level, and at least one teacher makes the handbook part of her class, including quizzes.
- Staff spoke in positive terms about their working conditions. As examples, they cited: strong support from the administration; the opportunity to work as a team focused on continually improving; regular feedback, evaluation, and professional development; regular staff meetings; and a strong culture of community and even family.

- Teachers noted that job responsibilities are clear and reasonable, and that they are well-compensated. The director reported that she created a checklist of what works for advisors and teachers, clarifying which responsibilities are daily, weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly, and that she meets with teachers and visits their classes regularly. The organization has worked with the director to reduce turnover and maintain experienced staff.
- Program leaders suggested that organization leaders work with them to create as many full-time positions as possible, and some personnel have advanced within the program.
- During interviews, the staff expressed that they have experienced very positive and ongoing dialogue at weekly staff meetings. They shared that there is a lot of support from program leaders, who are described by one staff as “very open to hearing our concerns and criticisms.”
- The staff expressed gratitude for how the program proactively anticipated their students’ and staff’s remote teaching and learning needs. With support from the organization, they responded to this challenge effectively by acquiring an abundance of technology devices and materials.
- Evidence strongly indicates that the transition to remote teaching and learning has been impressive and suggests strong organizational support from program administrators throughout the process. It’s clear that the entire staff are all moving in the same direction to build a high-quality remote approach, and program leaders have helped ensure that their vision for academic success is shared by staff and students.
- The organization’s director is invested in the adult education program and is responsive to requests from the program director, whom she supervises. Staff expressed how proud they are of their work, their accomplishments, and the value they feel in what they do.
- Private meetings have continued to be an option during remote programming using videoconference tools such as breakout rooms to ensure a high level of confidentiality. Teachers were well equipped with computer workstations, laptops, and document readers when onsite and had access to ZOOM accounts and Office 365 with the transition to remote teaching.
- Staff in leadership roles expressed that they receive on-going support and mentoring provided by school district leaders and the program’s former director. The superintendent has regular check-ins with the program director who also regularly meets with the district’s Chief Equity and Engagement Officer.

Organizational Capacity: Overall Areas for Improvement

- In some programs, space (when offering face-to-face classes, mostly pre-COVID), resources, and information sharing are insufficient. For example:
 - Some students noted that computers are outdated and have only a word processing program and the Mavis Beacon typing program. They also stated that the dictionaries are out-of-date and directed at sixth graders. The Review Team found indications of significant discrepancies in access to instructional space, resources, technology, and assessment options between classes.
 - Some staff expressed they were unhappy with less than suitable space given the number of students in a somewhat crowded building. The Review Team heard that students have

had to rely on broken Chromebooks, poor wireless access, and what they perceived is a slow response from the staff in charge of helping in these areas. One respondent said, "The students with the most technology needs always seem to have the least support."

- Neither staff nor students demonstrated knowledge of emergency procedures, nor reported that emergency procedures are explained to students verbally or in writing or reinforced with fire evacuation drills. At least one teacher commented that it wasn't necessary to discuss safety measures with students (onsite classes were being offered at the time of the PQR).
- Housed in an older building, the facility does not have an elevator or other accessibility features. The rooms are small and not designed to support individuals with mobility issues. Students, although grateful for the services they receive and their overall experience at the program, were most vocal about the conditions of the physical space. One student mentioned that the building needs to be improved "because it's a little sad for me." Another said, "we need a new building."
- In multisite programs, there are often inequitable resources across sites. For example:
 - Sites are mostly safe but not uniformly accessible. The Review Team has some concerns about safety with respect to the potability of drinking water in some sites and a lack of air conditioning that makes it necessary for staff to work in excessive temperatures. There was a significant concern about student access to technology and the extent to which students have access to sufficient supplies and current library books relevant to their career interests.
 - Regarding infrastructure, the Review Team noted further incongruence in the allocation of resources, space, and technology between the class types and sites. Staff in one site reported that the program has sufficient instructional space, with each teacher having a dedicated classroom, office space, and cubicles on their designated floor, and that they have access to space on other floors if needed; the facilities are in outstanding condition. In contrast, when the other class type held face-to-face classes, the program shared space with the public library, along with other buildings in the community, including a senior center and churches. According to interviewees, the different locations were in various degrees of disrepair; for example, at least one class had to be moved from the library basement after it flooded and was subsequently held in a hallway just above the main door to the building.
 - Staff at one site expressed satisfaction with the abundance of resources and materials provided to them and their students, such as Chromebooks, document readers, office space, LCD projectors & computers, a full computer lab, and access to helpful software applications. Some (in another site) described their office space as sometimes taken and continually shifting, and that they have limited access to technology that is too often out of date and therefore not very useful.
- Staff in some programs reported inconsistent working conditions. For example:

- While their job responsibilities are clear, some staff noted that they are not fully compensated for the amount of preparation time that is required.
- The Review Team heard specific examples of variable working conditions between program sites. For instance, while all staff are paid at rates within the required ACLS salary range, some staff are paid well above their colleagues at program sites. Some staff also expressed concern about having fewer opportunities for career advancement and felt they are taking on responsibilities that go beyond their written job descriptions. Furthermore, some staff didn't know much about the overall program's continuous improvement plan and suggested they may be siloed and not part of the bigger picture.
- Staff (in one class type) shared that they feel overworked and believe they are not provided enough hours to support their students. Their responses also suggest that clear and reasonable delineation of job responsibilities is an ongoing issue. Some described their office space as sometimes taken and continually shifting, and that they have limited access to technology that is too often out of date and therefore not very useful.
- Some adult education programs are not fully supported by their parent agencies. For example:
 - The Review Team found limited evidence of a system of ongoing support for program leadership. While the director served as education and career advisor for several years, she is relatively new to her current position. There was no indication of orientation procedures for program leaders, of opportunities for professional development other than those presented by SABES, of routine and continuous supervision, or that program leaders are evaluated.
 - The Review Team noted a significant concern about the organization's capacity to deliver a high-quality, standards-based educational program. Staff reported that their supervisor is readily accessible, but that she oversees three programs. Evidence gleaned from classroom observations, the curriculum review, and from interviews point to the need for teachers to have access to a supervisor with the experience needed to provide effective supervision.
 - The director frequently stated that the teachers know more than she does and was unable to describe any specific training or ongoing support the organization provides to help build her capacity as an educational leader.
 - There was little evidence that the parent organization directly supports program leaders' educational growth or is involved in their work regarding the development of career pathway collaborations, as outlined in the director's job description.
 - While the administrative coordinator and the program director have a good working relationship, they did not convey how the director is meaningfully supported in his specific role as the educational leader, i.e., providing a vision for the program as a whole, beyond a few suggested PD offerings; offerings that may or may not tie into a larger vision.

INDICATOR 8: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

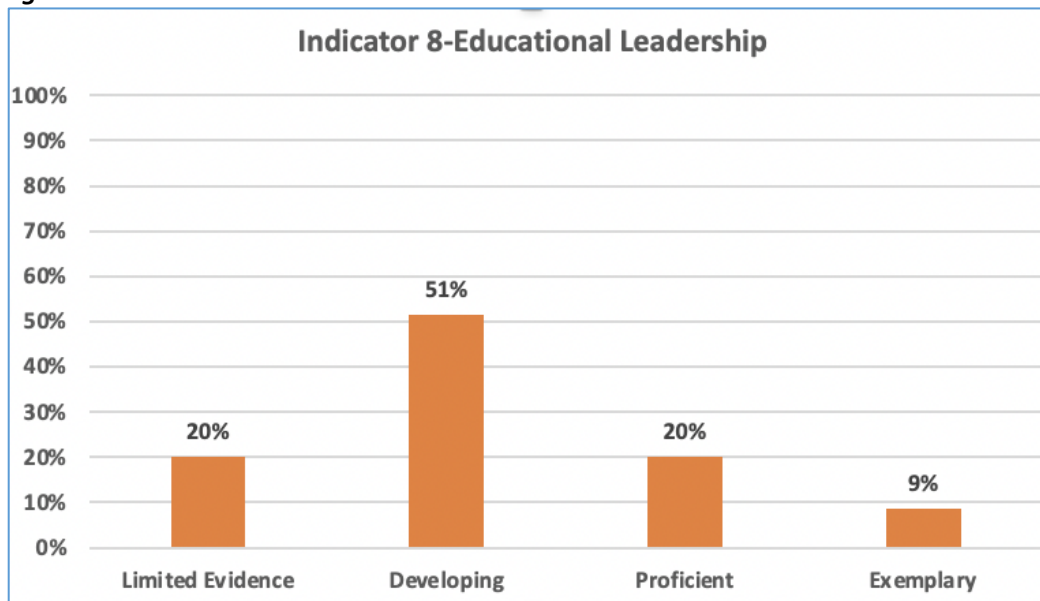
The program's leadership ensures that the vision for academic success is shared by staff and students and that the program engages in a continuous improvement planning process with the goal of improving student outcomes.

The Review Team analyzed interview responses, teacher evaluations, professional development plans, and continuous improvement plans to determine each program's overall rating for Indicator 8. ACLS looked for evidence in the four standards of this Indicator:

- Program leadership provides on-going supervision for all staff which includes regular supervision meetings, and an annual evaluation. Teachers receive regular classroom observations with written feedback and follow up that leads to improved teaching practice and student outcomes.
- Program leadership makes informed decisions for providing professional development to staff based on student outcome data and program needs.
- Program leadership collects and analyzes a variety of program and regional data to inform decisions about program planning and evaluation.
- Program leadership ensures the program's continuous improvement planning process involves all stakeholders, including students, and incorporates their feedback, reflections, and recommendations for improvement.

Figure 7 below shows the Indicator 8-*Educational Leadership* rating percentages for the 35 programs reviewed during Fiscal Year 2021.

Figure 7



Indicator 8 Synopsis

The majority of programs were rated Developing, with three programs rated Exemplary, seven rated Proficient, and seven rated Limited Evidence. Although most program leaders provide some level of supervision and evaluation to staff, only one-third of programs provided evidence that this process led to improved teaching practices and/or student outcomes. More than half of the programs reviewed use data sources, mostly program-based, to inform planning and evaluation decisions. However, the majority of programs did not appear to have a continuous improvement planning process that includes staff and student input or a shared vision for the program's direction.

Indicator 8 Data Analysis

In 91 percent of programs, program leaders provided some degree of supervision and evaluation of staff. However, the Review Team determined observation and evaluation processes were systematic and routine in only 48 percent of programs, and fewer, 34 percent, demonstrated evidence that supervision consistently led to improved teaching practices. In all reviewed programs, at least some staff regularly participated in professional development (PD). Staff PD activities at 51 percent of the programs were specifically aligned with the program's continuous improvement goals; in 7 other programs (20 percent), there was evidence of partial alignment between PD and program goals.

Thirteen programs provided evidence of a defined process in place for gathering staff and student feedback for program improvement, and another three programs identified a continuous improvement process that did not incorporate input from students and all staff. Data indicated that 12 programs consistently document goals in the form of a continuous improvement plan. Ten of the reviewed programs collect, analyze, and effectively use a variety of program and regional data to inform planning and evaluation decisions, while an additional 13 programs reported analyzing and applying only program-based data.

Further, 14 programs appeared to have effective systems in place to ensure a vision for academic success that is shared by staff and students.

Educational Leadership: Overall Promising Practices

- The program has a unique model of supervision, feedback, and evaluation of teachers and advisors. For example, part-time teachers are supervised by full-time teachers. Newer teachers receive formal feedback several times per year until they are more experienced. These observations appear to be well-received, and the staff expressed appreciation for this continuous feedback and supportive sharing of ideas in a manner described as "collegial, trustworthy, and respectful." Students mentioned they evaluate their teachers through confidential online surveys. Program leadership describes this somewhat unique endeavor as part of their "highly participatory and constructive process."
- The assistant director stated that she coaches teachers, which staff confirmed. She routinely reviews lesson plans before they are implemented and checks in on instruction through

classroom walkthroughs (when learning was onsite), following both up with feedback and discusses best practice teaching strategies in one-on-one and group meetings. Leaders conduct formal, pre-arranged class observations, and the director evaluates staff annually. Evaluation and observation materials submitted to the Review Team provided examples of positive comments, based on observed evidence, along with suggested goals and embedded recommendations.

- The director tailors all her comments to observed teaching behaviors and provides specific feedback including commending strengths and making recommendations for improvement. For example, the sample teacher evaluation cited specific best practices that were present or absent, and concrete next steps for improvement.
- The selection of professional development opportunities was described as being determined most often by identified program-wide staff needs, especially over the past year as they've transitioned to a remote model. For example, since last spring, staff have been provided several workshops on using Google Classroom to support their transition to teaching remotely. Program leadership also offers on-going professional development to staff. A research document is sent to staff to review, staff respond to questions in Google Docs relating to the article, and then in staff meetings, the topic is further discussed.
- Regarding professional development, teachers and advisors work with the program director to develop individual Professional Growth Plans aligned to their professional needs and program development goals. Teachers reported that they refer to the program goals to help them determine their individual goals and then search for professional development opportunities that address their goals.
- Several staff mentioned that collegial sharing of practices and new knowledge resulting from professional development participation occur regularly at weekly staff meetings.
- The Review Team heard several examples of how the program collects and analyzes program and regional data to inform planning and decision-making either at the classroom level or planning for the program as a whole. Advisors also cited ways they look closely at MassHire data related to career pathways and have, for example, recently discovered the adverse impact of COVID on the regional economy.
- Across all interviews, the staff cited examples of how internal data is used to inform programmatic decisions. Wait list, enrollment, attendance, and assessment data accessed via LACES were cited as the regular sources of internal program data. This data is used to regularly monitor student enrollment, progress, retention, and outcomes—both over a certain period of time and at any given point of time. Program data, including data from student surveys, serve as the main source of information regarding the design of the program's services each year, particularly what class schedule and what levels of intensity will be offered.
- Staff gave examples of how the Massachusetts Adult Education Data System (LACES) was used to add additional classes at lower levels and a conversation class based on the data findings. Regionally, the program reviews labor market information and identifies local employers that could be potential partners for students to potentially gain employment. Another example

included staff reviewing students' career plans before their annual career fair to help determine which business and training partners to invite to the fair.

- Staff, students, and program leaders described having a voice in their approaches to program improvement and shared that they could provide feedback and recommendations toward meeting these goals. Students reported that their teachers frequently ask for feedback on their classes and are given a student survey at the end of classes. The program also hosts annual meetings each spring to discuss how things went and plan for the following year.
- The director described a continuous improvement planning process that involves frequent meetings with staff and input from students gathered by advisors. Advisors described how, at the end of every school year, the whole staff meets to discuss what needs to be improved and create a continuous improvement plan for the next year. Awareness of the program's current continuous improvement goals was very consistent across the program.
- Staff, students, and program leaders each described having a voice in their approaches to program improvement and shared that they could provide feedback and recommendations toward meeting program goals. In 2018 the program did an extensive evaluation of all their services whereby they revised their mission, established core values, and set three primary goals with objectives. Each of these goals has several purposes, and each has a core group of staff focused on keeping the goal at the forefront of the staff's priorities.

Educational Leadership: Overall Areas for Improvement

- In many programs, evaluation does not support teachers in strengthening instruction. For example:
 - Many teachers could not articulate with certainty the frequency and modality of formal evaluations; some said that they have not been evaluated, some said that their evaluations are written, and others said that the evaluation was a discussion. Additionally, the process for staff evaluations was unclear. Also, staff were not able to provide examples of how feedback has led to improved teaching practices or student outcomes.
 - Neither leaders nor staff offered any examples of specific feedback or ways that supervision has led to improved advising or teaching. The observation examples received in advance of the review had been completed immediately before the PQR using the Review Team's observation form and did not appear to be part of an ongoing practice. Moreover, the feedback examples included no suggestions, and it was unclear if the observations contained in the feedback were shared with teachers.
 - The Review Team saw no evidence of any mechanism to distinguish effective teachers from less effective, or strategies to help a weak teacher strengthen her/his practice.
 - Although the program is experimenting with different feedback forms and formats, the majority of feedback provided is informal by nature; aside from the director, staff members do not receive annual reviews or formal, evaluative classroom observations.

- In the majority of programs reviewed in Fiscal Year 2021, there is no vision for the program that is shared by leadership, staff, students, and community stakeholders. For example:
 - The Review Team saw no evidence of a unifying program vision for student academic success, goals shared among all staff, or a planning process informed by relevant data and stakeholder input. When asked what the program’s continuous improvement goals are for this year, every interview group had a different response, each articulating their own goals or guessing at program goals.
 - Program leaders have not yet ensured that their vision for academic success is fully shared by their staff and students both within and across partner agencies.
 - Throughout the entire review process, the Review Team heard inconsistent and oftentimes vastly different responses regarding the program's overall culture, discrepancies in evidence and perceptions in general, and inconsistent feedback on the program's strengths and areas for improvement.
 - Staff reported that they had not been informed of any specific continuous improvement goals for this year, other than keeping students enrolled.
- Programs do not have a process for continuous improvement or a documented improvement plan, thus impacting staff understanding of the overall program goals. For example:
 - The program itself has no continuous improvement process, and neither staff nor students appear to have input into the program’s goals or a shared vision of what those goals are.
 - There was no evidence that a program-wide continuous improvement plan or process is in place. The lack of focus for improvement was evidenced by both teachers and the advisor reporting that the program has a lot of goals; one staff person said that the program has thousands of goals.
 - Staff was not able to articulate any formal process for determining these program improvement goals or knowledge of a continuous improvement process. Some students mentioned being asked their opinions on how things are going and how the program can be improved. Yet, it was unclear the extent to which this feedback is gathered and documented, or how it is incorporated into a continuous improvement process.
 - The program appears to have some process in place for gathering feedback from students and staff for the purpose of continuous improvement, but the result of that process seems more a collection of activities than a coherent vision for moving the program forward, and not all staff and students could clearly articulate the program’s improvement goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Programs are encouraged to use the promising practices and areas for improvement listed in this report as a guide for reflection and continuous improvement. Program directors can contact their ACLS program specialist and/or SABES to discuss strategies for addressing those indicators in need of improvement.

APPENDIX A-Fiscal Year 2021 Program Quality Reviews

1. Blue Hills Technical Regional School
2. Boston Public Schools
3. Brockton Public Schools
4. Cambridge Community Learning Center
5. Catholic Charitable Bureau of the Archdiocese of Boston, Labouré Center
6. Chelsea Public Schools
7. East Boston Harborside Community School
8. Franklin County Sheriff's Office
9. Holyoke Community College
10. International Language Institute
11. Jackson Mann Community Center Adult Education Program
12. Jamaica Plain Community Center Adult Education Program
13. Julie's Family Learning Program
14. Jewish Vocational Services
15. Lawrence Public Schools
16. Little Sisters of the Poor--Project Hope
17. Lowell Public Schools
18. Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
19. Massachusetts Department of Corrections
20. Methuen Public Schools
21. Mount Wachusett Community College
22. Mujeres Unidas Avanzando
23. North Shore Community Action Program
24. Pittsfield Public Schools
25. Plymouth Public Library
26. SCALE (Somerville Public Schools)
27. Springfield Technical Community College
28. Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
29. The Literacy Project
30. TRA Brockton
31. University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Workers' Education Program
32. Valley Opportunity Council
33. Worcester County Sheriff's Office
34. Worcester Public Schools
35. YMCA of Greater Boston International Learning Center

APPENDIX B-Fiscal Year 2021 Ratings

Note: In order to preserve confidentiality of specific program ratings, there is no correlation between Appendix A and Appendix B.

Program	Indicator 3	Indicator 4	Indicator 4.1	Indicator 4.2	Indicator 4.3	Indicator 4.4	Indicator 7	Indicator 8
Program BA	D	P	D	P	P	P	P	D
Program BB	D	D	D	D	D	D	P	D
Program BC	D	D	D	P	D	D	D	D
Program BD	P	P	P	D	P	P	P	D
Program BE	D	P	E	P	D	D	P	D
Program BF	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P
Program BG	LE	LE	LE	LE	D	LE	D	LE
Program BH	P	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Program BI	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Program BJ	D	P	P	D	P	P	E	P
Program BK	P	D	D	D	D	P	P	P
Program BL	D	D	D	D	D	P	P	D
Program BM	D	D	P	P	D	D	P	D
Program BN	D	D	D	P	D	D	D	D
Program BO	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	E
Program BP	D	D	P	LE	D	D	E	D
Program BQ	D	D	P	D	D	P	E	P
Program BR	P	D	D	D	D	D	P	P
Program BS	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	E
Program BT	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Program BU	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	E
Program BV	LE	LE	LE	LE	D	LE	D	LE
Program BW	D	D	D	P	D	P	E	D
Program BX	P	D	P	D	D	D	E	P
Program BY	D	D	D	P	D	D	D	LE
Program BZ	LE	LE	LE	LE	LE	D	D	D
Program CA	LE	LE	LE	LE	D	LE	D	LE
Program CB	D	P	P	D	P	P	D	D
Program CC	D	LE	LE	LE	LE	D	LE	LE
Program CD	P	D	D	P	D	D	P	D
Program CE	D	P	E	P	D	D	D	D
Program CF	D	LE	LE	LE	LE	D	D	LE
Program CG	P	D	D	D	D	D	P	P
Program CH	D	D	D	LE	D	D	P	LE
Program CI	D	P	E	P	D	D	P	D

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