

**RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING ADULT EDUCATION:
REPORT ON HOUSE RESOLUTION 304**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: During the Spring 1999 legislative session, the Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the State Board of Education were directed by the Illinois House of Representatives in House Resolution 304 “to work together to examine the issue of the most appropriate venue and agenda for adult education in the State of Illinois and to present their analysis and plan for adult education to the General Assembly...”

After hearing and receiving testimony at public hearings in August and September, 1999, the board chairs of the three education agencies asked staff to prepare two reports addressing, in particular, the matter of the appropriate venue for coordination of adult education in Illinois. These reports represent a collaborative response to that request by the staffs of the three agencies. Input received from Illinois citizens, those providing adult education programs and services, as well as those served by adult education programs, formed the basis for the following discussion of the appropriate agenda and venue for adult education in Illinois.

Recommendation: That the Board of Higher Education support the transfer of the administration of all adult education programs from the State Board of Education to the Illinois Community College Board.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING ADULT EDUCATION:
REPORT ON HOUSE RESOLUTION 304**

During the Spring 1999 legislative session, the Illinois House of Representatives adopted House Resolution 304 (Appendix A) that requests the Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, and the State Board of Education “to work together to examine the issue of the most appropriate venue and agenda for adult education in the State of Illinois and to present their analysis and plan for adult education to the General Assembly.”

Under the leadership of Board of Higher Education Chairman Philip Rock, the chairs of the three Boards conducted public hearings on August 31, 1999 in Chicago and on September 1, 1999 in Springfield on adult education. The hearings were open to all persons interested in providing testimony. Written testimony was requested from those presenting oral testimony as well as those not testifying in person. Persons providing testimony were asked to address three questions:

- Does the vision statement adopted by the Illinois Adult Education Advisory Council reflect appropriate adult education priorities for Illinois for the next ten years? If so, why? If not, why not?
- What is needed from the State level to advance these priorities?
- In deciding the venue for adult education, what factors should be considered?

Nearly 200 people provided oral or written testimony in response to these questions. The hearings provided an opportunity for the Board Chairs and Board members attending the hearings to discuss the adult education agenda and venue with those providing testimony. Transcripts of the hearings and other written testimony were compiled following the public hearings. There seemed to be broad agreement that the agenda for adult education, as expressed in the Adult Education Advisory Council’s *Vision for the Year 2008*, should continue to guide adult education in Illinois. The matter of “venue,” on the other hand, drew considerable commentary from proponents and opponents of a change of venue for the administration of adult education. Later sections of this report discuss the agenda and venue for Illinois adult education programs and administration.

Following the hearings, the chairs of the three Boards asked a working group comprised of staff from each of the three Boards to prepare two reports – one supporting the position to keep the administration of adult education programs at the State Board of Education and one supporting the position to transfer the administration of adult education programs to the Illinois Community College Board. The reports are attached as Appendices B and C, respectively.

At the time this report was prepared, the State Board of Education was scheduled to consider the transfer of adult education administration at its January 20, 2000 meeting and the

Illinois Community College Board was scheduled to consider the issue at its January 21, 2000 meeting. An update on these actions will be provided to the Board at the February meeting.

Adult Education Agenda

Adult education teaches people 16 years of age and older who are no longer enrolled in school and who lack the basic skills necessary for employment or further education and training. Adult education programs include adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a Second Language (ESL) which provides English language skills for non-native English speakers. Programs also provide support services and job-seeking skills. Primarily, three groups deliver adult education in Illinois: community colleges, public schools, and community-based organizations.

A total of 93,035 students were served by State Board of Education funded adult education, the majority of whom (56 percent) were served by English as a Second Language courses. In terms of courses offered, fifty-five percent of units of instruction were provided as adult basic, secondary, and high school completion courses. Forty-one percent of units were English as a Second Language courses. Community colleges also served approximately 25,000 adult education students using non-State Board of Education resources.

In addition to funds received through the State Board of Education, community colleges use other funds to support adult education instruction and support services. However, these funds reduce the allocation of funds received by the colleges from the State Board of Education.

Fiscal year 2000 appropriations to the State Board of Education for adult education totaled \$43 million. This includes state (\$28 million) and federal (\$15 million) adult education general revenues. Slightly less than \$3 million is being used for administration and statewide activities. Of the \$40 million distributed to adult education programs, just under \$25 million (62.5 percent) went to community colleges. Public schools received approximately \$10 million (25 percent) of the funds with the remainder going to community-based organizations and other providers, including one university, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Just over 50 percent of funds were provided to Chicago and the collar counties.

The State Board of Education and the Illinois Community College Board receive extensive input from the field in establishing the agenda that currently provides that framework and vision for adult education programs in Illinois. The Illinois Adult Education Advisory Council, established in 1996, and comprised of adult education practitioners and administrators representing the diverse network of adult educators in Illinois. The Council advises both the Illinois Community College Board and the State Board of Education on the present and future agenda for adult education.

In 1998, the Advisory Council adopted *Vision for the Year 2008*. The recommendations of the Advisory Council's *Vision* are to move toward:

- An education system and structure that develops a strong, efficient delivery system that is responsive to the multiplicity of learning needs in the State of Illinois;
- Program curriculum that focuses on outcomes and offers a variety of methods to meet diverse and changing student needs;

- Funding that assures adequate, stable, flexible resources which promote and enable program growth and innovation for all adult education students;
- Staff and staff development that ensures a professionally competent and committed staff;
- Partnerships that support full and authentic relationships with business, industry, and community agencies;
- Access that reduces barriers and increases accessibility through technology and workplace/community locations; and,
- Advocacy that promotes a common awareness and acceptance of the need for adult education.

During the hearings, *Vision for the Year 2008* was discussed and, from those presenting testimony, widely endorsed as the proper framework and agenda for adult education in Illinois. As a result of this consensus, *Vision for the Year 2008* should continue to serve as the overall planning framework for Illinois adult education.

The Venue for Statewide Coordination of Adult Education

Under the stewardship of the State Board of Education, adult education in Illinois has been recognized as one of the best programs in the nation. In part, the successes of Illinois adult education can be attributed to ready access to programs and services due to the number of diverse and geographically dispersed service providers and the level of coordination and cooperation among state agencies. These factors must continue, regardless of which state agency is assigned state-level coordinating responsibilities.

However, the environment in which adult education serves is changing rapidly. Illinois and other states are concentrating efforts on the preparation of an effective workforce. Increasingly, possession of a high school education is not enough to ensure meaningful work; transitions from high school education to further education levels have become a central theme in workforce preparation initiatives.

Further, the clientele for adult education now demand broader services than classroom instruction. Students have needs for services like childcare and transportation in order to even attend adult education. They also need academic assessment and tutoring, family and job counseling, and an array of other assistance to move beyond high school level education into postsecondary education programs.

Appendices B and C provide a detailed discussion of the rationale for keeping the administration of adult education with the State Board of Education or for transferring this responsibility to the Illinois Community College Board. After considering these factors, the Board of Higher Education staff recommends the transfer of the administration of statewide adult education programs to the Illinois Community College Board. Five principal reasons lead to this conclusion:

- First, Illinois community colleges currently provide the majority of adult education occurring in the state. As the provider of choice, community colleges are best positioned to assess the educational needs and aspirations of adult learners and coordinate the

academic plans with the vast array of services available at community colleges to achieve those goals. At the state level, the Illinois Community College Board, because of its community college coordinating responsibilities and relationships with the colleges, is better positioned to integrate and prioritize the needs of adult education with other services targeted for adult learners.

- Second, the administration of adult education should rest with the agency most willing to advocate for adult education programs. Currently, only 32 percent of adult education completers attend postsecondary education - more students need to make the transition from adult education to further education or training. The Illinois Community College Board is better positioned to advocate for increasing the number of adult learners transitioning to further studies and increasing opportunities to do so.
- Third, the Illinois Community College Board will increase the participation, persistence and completion rates for Illinois adult education, and it will increase the levels of student learning and educational achievement.
- Fourth, the Illinois Community College Board will increase public accountability for the stewardship of the fiscal and human resources of adult education by providing evidence of continuous quality improvement efforts and results through an annual results report to the Illinois Board of Higher Education.
- Fifth, the primacy placed on adult education within the competing funding priorities of the state and the increased demands for a workforce with postsecondary education and skills better rests with the agency which has oversight authority for the majority of adult education, namely, the Illinois Community College Board.

In view of these conclusions, and in the interest of advancing the resolution recommended below, the Illinois Community College Board staff have agreed to prepare a report each year as part of the agency's results report covering topics such as the following:

- The number of students served by common schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations and the funds allocated to each sector;
- The proportion of Illinois' eligible population served by various categories of adult education programs (e.g., adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English as a second language) and by provider;
- The success rates of students served by various adult education programs as a proportion of the students served, by service and category of provider;
- The statewide participation, persistence and completion rates, and the levels of student learning and educational attainment;
- The funds expended by all providers in all instructional categories and support services such as transportation and day-care for clients of all adult education programs; and
- The success in transitioning students from adult education programs into subsequent levels of education by provider.

The staff recommends that the Board adopt the following resolution:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education supports the transfer of the administration of all adult education programs from the State Board of Education to the Illinois Community College Board.

APPENDIX A

TEXT OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 304

WHEREAS, The State of Illinois is experiencing the lowest unemployment in over two decades with many sectors of the Illinois economy experiencing severe labor shortages; and

WHEREAS, The State of Illinois is home to some of the nation's top businesses and business sectors including: manufacturing, technology, agri-business, retail, hospitality and visitor industry, biotechnology, and health care; and

WHEREAS, Many sectors of Illinois' economy are increasingly relying upon new American immigrants to meet the challenges of severe labor shortages; and

WHEREAS, The State of Illinois is home to outstanding post-secondary institutions experienced in the education of adults of all ages, races, ethnicities, and walks-of-life; and

WHEREAS, The Illinois economy may suffer from severe labor shortages as employers, business, and industry seek a qualified workforce, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we respectfully request that the Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the State Board of Education work together to examine the issue of the most appropriate venue and agenda for adult education in the State of Illinois; and be it further

RESOLVED, That they report their analysis and plan for adult education in the State of Illinois to the members of the General Assembly no later than October 15, 1999; and be it further

RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Chairmen of the Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the State Board of Education.

APPENDIX B

A Rationale for Continuing Adult Education Administration at the Illinois State Board of Education

Executive Summary

Adult education in Illinois has flourished under the leadership of the Illinois State Board of Education. The system developed under ISBE is focused on the needs of the adult learner, recognizes that solid basic skills are a critical foundation to workplace readiness, encourages partnerships and collaboration at all levels, rewards improvement in programs and services, and respects the many roles of adults – particularly as their child’s first teacher. The diverse array of educational providers and services will be maintained to ensure that adult learners are able to choose from a broad menu of options in meeting their educational needs. The state’s performance is strong, often exceeding comparable national measures, and a nationally recognized data driven accountability system is in place that enables ISBE to provide outcomes for individuals, providers and the system as a whole. Testimony received by the panel repeatedly acknowledged the effectiveness of ISBE’s leadership in adult education. Without conclusive evidence that the considerable investment of time and effort required to transfer adult education from ISBE would add value to programs, services or administration in Illinois, adult education should remain with ISBE.

Philosophy

ISBE’s administration of adult education is based on five beliefs:

1. Illinois’ system of adult education must be driven by the needs and goals of adult learners;
2. the teaching of basic skills is the primary -- and statutory -- responsibility of adult education;
3. the system of adult education works best through partnerships with broader education and workforce development systems;
4. leadership combined with customer service will continue to improve adult education programs and services; and
5. adult education must be closely tied to family literacy programs to ensure that parents are involved early in their child’s education.

These beliefs have positioned Illinois as a national leader in adult education and family literacy.

Learner Focus. The single most distinctive characteristic of adult learners, as a group, is diversity. Ranging in age from 16 to 64 (40 percent being between the ages of 16 and 24), the women and men in an adult education class could be employed or unemployed, secondary school dropouts or immigrants with college degrees, young parents or grandparents. What they have in common is a need to learn basic skills. To meet that core need for such varied learners, an effective adult education system must be responsive, innovative and flexible. ISBE has supported a diverse array of providers and learning venues to maximize the options available to adult

learners, has required local planning to improve service coordination and respond to local needs and resources, and has encouraged adult education providers to innovate and tailor their programs to local needs through broad and flexible program guidelines.

Basic Skills. The acquisition of basic skills is the foundation for obtaining and retaining employment. They are also the foundation for meeting other purposes of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), such as being a child's first teacher or becoming a citizen. Testimony repeatedly affirmed that adult education must remain foremost an education program.

Adult education has both benefited from and contributed to ISBE's statutory responsibility for K-12 education. Under the *Illinois School Code*, ISBE is responsible for the educational policies for public schools, pre-school through grade 12, and for the administration of adult education, defined in statute as "courses of instruction regularly accepted for graduation from elementary or high schools." A major benefit of having adult education administered by ISBE will be the alignment of the state's rigorous new learning standards to adult education standards so that all learners are prepared to meet the challenges associated with the workplace and participatory citizenship.

Partnerships. Partnerships and collaboration increase opportunities for learners and job seekers and provide support as they pursue those opportunities. At the state level, ISBE's long-term collaboration with the Department of Public Aid and its successor, the Department of Human Services (DHS), created education opportunities and support for welfare recipients to meet the changing requirements of welfare policies. The success of this partnership has been documented by the thousands of persons who left welfare and the millions of dollars in welfare savings. Moreover, maintaining this partnership is critical in light of data pointing to the strong correlation between poverty and student achievement. Poverty is the most powerful predictor of successful learning. Schools with high numbers of families in poverty have poor Illinois Student Achievement Test scores. Acquiring basic skills is the first step to bringing families out of poverty and helping children achieve their full potential.

Program and Service Improvement. You can't improve what you can't measure. ISBE has long advocated this premise beginning with its involvement in creating the Illinois Common Performance Management System (ICPMS) and its advocacy for quantified outcome measures at the state/national level. By incorporating such measures in the adult education grant application, ISBE has prepared Illinois adult education providers to track and to meet (or exceed) the performance expectations of Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Illinois ranks second nationally in job placement of adult education completers and eleventh in numbers entering post-secondary employment.

Family Literacy. Working with families today is the best way to prepare the workforce of tomorrow. Internal program linkages between adult education and early childhood education that create opportunities for parents to become their child's first teacher should not be broken. Research data from the National Adult Literacy Survey indicates that a child's achievement is directly linked to the parent's education level. Furthermore, this factor is not overcome by the child's subsequent education. Well-educated families support a strong workforce.

Leadership and Advocacy

An enviable record of demonstrated outcomes and system performance attests to ISBE's effective leadership and advocacy. ISBE advocated for and received a 26 percent increase in funds over five years. ISBE developed a ten-year vision for adult education that was adopted by

the Adult Education Advisory Council and widely supported by testimony at the hearings. ISBE rapidly implemented a process for identifying individuals to represent adult education on local workforce investment boards. Here are several examples of how Illinois' adult education system has improved under ISBE's leadership:

1. *Learner Focus.* As a result of ISBE's commitment to developing distance learning opportunities, Illinois is one of five states that funded and participated in the creation of Crossroads Café, an acclaimed television series for English as a Second Language learners. Also, to better prepare welfare recipients with suspected learning disabilities for employment, ISBE partnered with DHS to design and fund a teacher training program and service system.
2. *Basic Skills.* ISBE established a comprehensive professional development/teacher training system for the field of adult education. Testimony from both sides gave strong support for retaining this service center system.
3. *Partnerships.* Adult education assumed administrative responsibility for the Even Start Family Literacy program within ISBE to strengthen local partnerships between adult education and early childhood programs. Adult education also partners with other secondary completion programs, the state's Education to Careers (ETC) initiative, vocational education and other WIA partner programs. These partnerships with other educational programs foster a cohesive, comprehensive approach to serving families.
4. *Program and Service Improvement.* ISBE implemented the Student and Administrative Information Reporting System (STAIRS) not only to fulfill federal reporting requirements, but also to enable tracking of individual student progress. With these data, a local program can evaluate the effectiveness of its curricula and educational strategies to target improvement efforts.
5. *Family Literacy.* To strengthen the linkage between adult education and reading initiatives, ISBE staff is drawing on reading research to improve instruction for adults while helping those adults support their children's reading education at home. This kind of cross fertilization occurs frequently and easily within ISBE.

ISBE's leadership agenda under WIA focuses on continuous program and service improvement. Although Title II of WIA does not include a customer satisfaction performance indicator, ISBE proposes to implement the use of standardized customer satisfaction surveys similar to those used by One-Stop Centers and Title I providers. These surveys will clarify customer expectations and identify areas for improvement. Learning standards and skill standards will be established for adults in secondary programs so that individual progress and achievement can be measured more precisely. This will permit more accurate reporting of performance and will establish a baseline for continuous improvement efforts. Finally, ISBE will offer opportunities for every funded entity to participate in the Lincoln Quality Award process to continuously improve overall service.

Workforce

ISBE is committed to working actively to support and improve Illinois' workforce investment system. As a mandatory One-Stop partner, local adult education providers must meet or exceed their performance benchmarks for individuals placed and retained in employment to qualify for incentive grants. Illinois' 1997 performance data indicate that the basic skills training provided by adult education establish a strong foundation for work skills. Of all Illinois' adults who completed the adult education program, 49% entered employment. This compares favorably to the national median of 17%. Of those who entered employment, 79% were employed one year later and, of those, 65% were employed at the end of two years. Illinois ranks first among competitor industrial states in the employment of adult education students. Basic skills training is a sound approach for obtaining and retaining employment.

Both ISBE and ICCB agree, and much of the testimony supported, that adult education completers should be able to transition easily into post-secondary education and/or occupational training. This transition occurs now. Of all adult education completers, 32% enroll in post-secondary education. Currently, community colleges provide about 70% of the total statewide units of instruction in adult education (for which they receive 69% of the available funds). All students at community college adult education programs should have full access to the college's opportunities for advanced education or training. A change in governance would have no impact on these adult learners. A "seamless transition" to post-secondary education or occupational training for adult education completers is a function of program availability, coordination and access, not governance.

Most of the customers in adult education, however, are not seeking post-secondary education. In 1998, 54% of adult education students in Illinois were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL). Mastery of basic English and citizenship were their primary goals. Intake data reveal that 43% of the students who enroll in adult education are employed when they enroll. Entry into the workforce is not their primary goal, although they may, after completing a GED, subsequently take advantage of post-secondary opportunities to improve their employment and career options. Illinois' adult education system must be responsive to the needs and aspirations of all its customers. As a partner in the workforce investment system, adult education must be flexible enough to serve all adults who need basic skills training and not focus primarily on adults who want post-secondary education or training. This conforms with the goal of the broader workforce investment system, which is to offer choices to the customer, not to channel them toward one particular service.

Access

ISBE is committed to statewide access for the adult learner. Two potentially conflicting positions may be advanced around access: 1) All Illinoisians must have access to adult education no matter where they live; and 2) limited resources must be placed in areas of the highest need and demand for service. ISBE balances these positions by awarding funds based on regional need, past performance and proposed achievement of outcomes. The result has been the creation of a diverse system of providers that meets the range of adult education needs throughout the state. Through this approach, the largest provider of services -- the community college system -- has been balanced with a variety of complementary alternatives. This system works for Illinois.

Some testimony said adult learners should be served in adult settings, and others said that the kind of program mattered more than the setting. Both assertions make sense. Some people thrive in a college environment; some are intimidated by it. Many of the 54 percent of the adults

enrolled in ESL require a very different educational process to succeed in U.S. culture and the workplace. The enrollment, attendance and survey data from ESL learners speak to their desire for short-term interventions. Immigrants generally require service as soon as they arrive in the U.S. and often prefer a friendly and supportive environment. Some avoid institutional settings. ISBE provides the system flexibility that allows public funds to flow directly to community based organizations to provide services to immigrants.

Support Services

Providing supportive services to adult learners is an issue of adequate funding, not of governance. In the 1960s, Illinois began creating full-time comprehensive centers for adult education because the complex nature of adult learning called for extensive support networks. At that time community colleges were just being established, so these centers were located in public schools. When community colleges wanted to duplicate the centers, funding was limited. As new funding became available, ISBE increased awards to community colleges. Whether those funds were used for instruction or supportive services was and continues to be a local decision. ISBE does not award a separate supportive services grant.

The panel heard testimony from many adult learners regarding their need for varied support services to meet their educational goals. In its administration of numerous federal and state education programs that serve adult learners and their families, ISBE supports local flexibility

Teaching and Learning

Teaching. ISBE has developed a unique and nationally recognized teacher training system. Through four regional teacher-training centers (three associated with universities), adult education professionals receive high quality, coordinated professional development. Because many instructors teach part-time and few have an opportunity for formal training, these centers have helped define a common pedagogical framework for adult education. Through workshops, conferences and seminars, most adult educators are able to understand and apply certain effective principles and approaches.

Under ISBE, professional development services for other family education programs have been enriched by the best practices and principles of adult education. For example, early childhood educators have a better understanding of the important role of the parent as a learner and teacher. ISBE staff in quality assurance and school improvement planning attend workshops addressing the critical roles that adults play in childhood education.

Learning. While preparing adults to enter the workforce is of vital importance to Illinois and the nation, the goals of adult learners are varied. An employed apprentice needs a GED to become a journeyman. A mother wants to read to her child. An immigrant takes ESL classes to become a citizen. One of the three purposes of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of WIA) pertains to employment; the other two address the goals of obtaining the skills needed to become a full partner in their child's education and completing secondary education. Similarly, only one of the core indicators of performance for adult education pertains to employment; the other two concern improving literacy skills and earning a secondary credential. Illinois must meet or exceed its performance benchmarks on all three goals. While adult education is an essential part of the workforce investment system, it must always be more than a workforce development program.

According to the National Institute for Literacy, self-reported goals expressed by adult learners include:

- accessing information and orienting themselves in the world;
- giving voice to their ideas and opinions and having confidence that their voice will be heard and taken into account;
- solving problems and making decisions on their own, acting independently as a parent, citizen, and worker, for the good of their families, their communities and their nation; and
- continuing to learn in order to keep up with a rapidly changing world.

While these learner goals appear much broader than the goals in WIA, it is ISBE's position that they must be addressed in all adult literacy and basic skills programs. A well-designed, well-taught basic skills curriculum helps learners access information, articulate opinions and solve problems. Good instruction in basic skills will address all three purposes and all three goals of WIA. By stressing the importance of teaching basic skills, ISBE has made possible an environment in which providers can meet the diverse literacy needs of all learners with skills that transfer among the workplace, the community and the family.

System Design and Development

ISBE believes that design and development of the adult education system follows from the five core beliefs summarized in the "Philosophy" section above.

Learner Focus. Adults should have access to instruction in various settings and the instruction should be tailored to meet their needs. It should be "client-centered," meaning that providers should continually assess how well they have satisfied their customers and make improvements to increase satisfaction.

Basic Skills. The system must provide education focused on basic skills instruction that is accessible, useful, interesting and effective for the many different learners who seek services for various reasons. Basic skills are the foundation for developing self-sufficiency skills.

Partnerships. Under ISBE, the adult education system has established partnerships with programs within the agency and with all of the state's workforce development agencies. It has supported local partnerships through policies, application expectations and technical assistance. The system is well prepared to function as an effective partner, including under WIA.

Program and Service Improvement. The system under ISBE is designed to be outcome focused and performance driven. All applicants for funding must quantify the outcomes that they expect will be achieved. Achieving desired outcomes results in increased program funding (\$9 million statewide), an incentive that encourages improvement. This process will be refined by aligning the financial incentive to encourage achievement of the federal core indicators and by instituting a customer satisfaction performance factor.

Family Literacy. ISBE administers numerous programs which are being connected to adult education at the local level. These include family literacy, homeless children and youth support, Title I and early childhood programs, and reading and math improvement. ISBE will also soon address the needs of learners aged 0-8 by developing comprehensive family service centers. Adult education will be a key provider of services in these centers.

Administrative Experience and Capacity

ISBE is committed to the efficient and effective administration of adult education in Illinois. As a regulatory agency, ISBE has the legal authority and infrastructure needed to track and report on fiscal accountability, conduct audits and monitor progress, direct the use of funds and request the return of funds not used appropriately, provide technical assistance and report on outcomes. ISBE has the organizational structure in place to perform these critical functions, and its staff has the expertise and years of fiscal and programmatic experience to perform them well. For over 30 years ISBE has administered all state and federal adult education and family literacy funds without audit exception.

It would be very challenging for an agency unfamiliar with the many tasks performed by ISBE to replicate these functions and assure that Illinois would continue to comply with state and federal laws, rules and regulations. A new administrative agency would need to develop and implement an array of policies and procedures, an undertaking requiring considerable time and energy. Hiring and preparing staff; developing and securing ICCB Board approval of requisite policies; securing federal approval of the administrative transfer and acquiring training in federal regulations and program guidelines; creating and implementing administrative procedures; transferring existing records, files and grant information; constructing needed new fiscal, data management and reporting systems; establishing the needed audit and regulatory functions—all of these tasks would require immediate attention and significant agency resources. Ultimately, this substantial expenditure of effort must be weighed against the value that would be added to the system by undertaking this change.

Accountability

ISBE is a recognized leader in accountability in adult education. As an originator of the ICPMS, adult education is able to report outcomes for individuals, providers and the system as a whole. ICPMS data reveal that 49% of the Illinois' adults who completed the adult education program entered employment, well above the national median of 17%. With these data, Illinois was one of the few states that had an historical basis for establishing performance benchmarks for employment and retention.

Establishment of the Student and Administrative Information Reporting System (STAIRS) has enabled ISBE to report for each student the level and amount of service provided by funding source, as well as individual student learning gains. While data elements collected by STAIRS are required for federal reports, the system was designed as an evaluative tool for identifying and analyzing factors that contribute to student achievement.

Many testifiers asserted that the administrative problem of reporting data to two agencies could be resolved by transferring governance. However, transferring administrative authority to another entity will not eliminate federal data collection requirements. Data reported on STAIRS would have to be collected and reported, whether by STAIRS or some other system. If the required data can be collected by the various systems that colleges use instead of STAIRS, then ICCB and ISBE have the ability and authority to eliminate any duplicative requirements without changing governance.

Conclusion

The Illinois State Board of Education:

- Supports a diverse delivery system, responsive to the needs of all learners with basic skills as the foundation for empowering learners as workers, citizens and family members;
- Maintains strong partnerships with all of the state's employment, training and education partners;
- Has a strong plan for continuous program improvement based on reliable data and customer satisfaction;
- Has in place the dedicated and experienced staff, administrative procedures and policies, and the needed fiscal, information management and audit systems to continue to administer the program efficiently and effectively; and
- Is linking adult education with family literacy efforts to increase the effectiveness of both.

With no conclusive evidence that transferring adult education from ISBE would improve service delivery, improve performance or streamline administration, the administration of adult education must remain with ISBE.

APPENDIX C

A Rationale for Transferring Adult Education Administration to the Illinois Community College Board

Executive Summary

During the public hearings, several testifiers asked, “Why does the issue of adult education governance keep coming up?” Dr. Charles Novak, President of Richland Community College, got to the heart of the question in his testimony. He said, “Why does the issue of adult education keep surfacing?...The answer to the larger question is that we are at these hearings because adult education in Illinois is not what it can be. Although the Vision Statement for 2008 is well-crafted, there is a great deal to be achieved. If we want to achieve the Vision for 2008, then we better start by examining the system and structure for providing adult education.”

This paper has identified key reasons why the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) would provide the leadership, structure, and support needed to make adult education “what it can be...” The following list summarizes these key reasons.

- Illinois had the vision to create an agency to carry out the State’s commitment to meeting the education and workforce development needs of adults--the Illinois Community College Board. The State can maximize its investment by assigning the administration of adult education to the ICCB.
- The ICCB’s mission includes both education and workforce development. Testimony, performance data, and survey results validate these goals are very important to adult education students and employers. Adult education should be led and administered by an agency that mirrors and supports the priorities of adult students and has the expertise to connect education with workforce development to benefit individual learners, local employers, and the State.
- The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Illinois House Resolution 304 clearly draw all aspects of adult education into relationship with workforce development and postsecondary education. With its strategic role and expertise in adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce development, the ICCB is best prepared to lead this expanded relationship.
- Adult education must be grounded in the teaching strategies and learning styles that are most effective with adults. These are fundamentally different from those that succeed with children. The most effective leadership for these programs comes from the ICCB whose focus is the effective teaching of adults.
- Currently, Illinois ranks in the lower third of all states in English as a Second Language (ESL) performance. As the administrative entity, the ICCB will work with ESL providers to improve performance and enhance student outcomes in order to elevate the State’s national standing.
- By moving the administration of adult education programs to the ICCB, the State will:

- strengthen the dynamic relationship between education and workforce development to provide employers with a much needed expanded pool of better qualified potential employees,
- reduce duplication of administrative functions to help streamline the operation of State government and increase efficiency and coordination, and
- consolidate accountability efforts to increase the completeness of information about the adult education system—its students and outcomes.

The answer to Dr. Novak’s question of why “the issue of adult education keeps coming up” lies in how best to meet student goals and business needs. The ICCB is the educational agency specifically created by the State to address both the education and workforce development needs of Illinois adult students. It is the agency that can link adult education with workforce development while enhancing the educational strengths of the program. The ICCB has supported the growth of adult education programs in community colleges that now provide 70 percent of the statewide units of instruction and produce more than 80 percent of the State’s student performance achievements. The ICCB will use its unique strengths to ensure that strong and diverse adult education programs enhance students’ skills and quality of life while helping local businesses improve their ability to compete by expanding the skilled labor force.

Philosophy

Adult education is a new beginning for thousands of adults. These programs serve people 16 years and older who may not have succeeded, completed, or ever entered elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. Now these students have matured, gained experiences, and taken on responsibilities that have changed their goals, needs, ways of thinking, and learning styles. Adult education is the primary means of empowering them with the abilities and confidence to make up skill deficits so they can become full and productive members of their communities. It provides basic and vocational skills, General Education Development (GED) completion, and family literacy assistance as the foundation of the next best step for each student toward employment and personal goals.

Dr. Wayne Green, Trustee of Carl Sandburg College and retired professor of Physics at Knox College, testified that there is a difference of “orientation” between traditional educational philosophy and that of teaching adults who have more mature goals and learning styles. Adult education methodologies in advising, assessment, curriculum and teaching must be oriented to capitalize on these differences and prepare learners for many options in work, further education, and personal fulfillment.

The ICCB and the community college system were created specifically to meet the educational and economic needs of adults and local communities. They focus on the effective teaching of adults and preparing them for success in employment and lifelong learning. In adult education, this includes basic literacy, vocational skills, or the abilities to speak, read, and write English and gain citizenship. The ICCB mission includes “adult basic education, adult secondary/general education development, English as a Second Language, and any other instruction designed to prepare students to function successfully in society and to experience success in postsecondary education and the world of work.”

The ICCB believes that the education of limited English proficient adults is a high priority, especially in the areas of language proficiency, workplace training, citizenship, and family literacy. The global economy has drawn some U.S. businesses to seek employees in other countries, but has also drawn huge numbers of immigrants to this country seeking education, work, and a higher quality of life. Over half of the current adult education students lack adequate English language skills or are immigrants whose most urgent need is for English literacy skills to enable them to meet social, educational, and work demands.

One of the most important responsibilities of adult education is to give adults the skills and support needed to break the cycle of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy that too often passes from generation to generation. There are no longer good opportunities for work without basic skills, and a high school diploma or GED are insufficient to gain and retain a job that leads to economic self-sufficiency. Programs must serve adults at whatever level of ability they have and assist them as mature people to obtain the skills, credentials, and jobs they need and want. This includes the ability to continue to learn as personal, technological, and employment changes occur.

Leadership and State Advocacy

Adult education programs contribute greatly to the public good and yet receive too little recognition and support. Adult education is a primary intervention to raise the basic skills of adults and families. It is closely correlated with a decrease in poverty, welfare, low income level, unemployment, crime, and illness. These tremendous individual and social benefits should be supported at the agency and State government levels.

Adult education must be made a high priority for the State and a top priority within the administering agency if it is to reach more of the people in need. This is essential if Illinois is to close the gap between the basic skills of its residents and the demands of a changing society and economy. Adult education programs are producing good results, but they serve only a small portion of the 2.2 million people in Illinois who were found to have low literacy levels by the National Literacy Survey. Some people leave school without gaining basic skills and others are new immigrants to Illinois who need English language skills, regardless of previous educational attainment.

The ICCB is committed to providing the leadership, advocacy, and support that adult education must have to meet the great demands placed upon it. At the State level, ICCB partners with the Illinois Departments of Commerce and Community Affairs, Employment Security, and Human Services as well as the Governor's Office and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and other agencies to put in place the policies, resources and coordinated activities needed to support adult education. The ICCB advocated for the appointment of community college presidents to the new local workforce investment boards in addition to the required adult education and postsecondary vocational education members. In this way, the needs of adult learners have a stronger voice and the resources of community colleges are at the table when local services are being coordinated.

The ICCB has a record of strong advocacy for adult education. The ICCB advocated moving adult education toward performance-based funding. This resulted in a State appropriation of nine million dollars for performance funding beginning in FY1997. The ICCB supported opening the availability of State funds to community-based organizations that provide adult education programs. This recommendation was not implemented in FY2000. The ICCB

provided leadership in a vigorous and successful effort to restore \$1.65 million in State GRF funds for adult education that had been dropped from the ISBE budget in FY1999.

Workforce Development

House Resolution 304 rightly draws the State's needs for workforce development together with the purpose and goals of adult education. The 1998 Three-Year Goals for Adult Education developed by the Illinois Adult Education Advisory Council and practitioners cites as a critical challenge the lack of awareness that adult learners can contribute to businesses and businesses can reciprocate. National studies reveal that many adults are missing from the productive ranks of the workforce or are employed only part-time in temporary jobs that give neither stability nor opportunities. Many lack basic skills in reading, writing, computation or English literacy.

The U.S. and the world economies are rapidly fostering a market-driven, knowledge-based, and technology-intensive workplace. In Illinois, unemployment is at the lowest rate in the last 24 years and employers are desperate to hire well-qualified people. Adult education programs can help match the needs of individuals for additional skills with the needs of employers to hire skilled people. In the vast majority of jobs, proficiency is required beyond the high school or GED level. This demand for more highly skilled workers exists in an environment of growing illiteracy, increasing drop-out rates, a large influx of immigrants who do not have English language skills, and welfare and job training policies that emphasize job placement before skill development. Thus, too many adults do not have the skills they need for employment and are falling further and further behind as social safety nets disappear.

The ICCB is charged by statute, mission, and its goals for FY1998-2000 to address both the educational and economic objectives of adults. It is focused on and expert at balancing and blending the academic and basic skills needs of adults with their simultaneous need to prepare for employment or to advance on the job. Partnerships with business and industry are fundamental to the accomplishment of these goals and to meeting the needs of employers and communities for a strong workforce.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) acknowledges the importance of adult education in workforce development by reauthorizing the Adult Education Act as Title II of WIA. This Act places adult education in a cooperative, but distinct, role with 11 other education and employment programs for adults. Coordination of the educational strengths of adult education with workforce development, welfare reform, crime reduction, improved health care and other public priorities is essential. The ICCB is dedicated to meeting the educational and economic needs of adults. It is well-positioned to strongly advocate for adult education in both the education and workforce development arenas as the State undertakes the streamlining of these functions.

Access

Access to programs is a critical issue in a State as demographically and geographically diverse as Illinois. To have high quality adult education available in all areas of the State and for all types of students requires variety in the environment, geography, and methods of instruction. Adults in need of these programs come from diverse backgrounds, countries, cultures, and social and economic environments. Only a system that accommodates these differences can reach them.

Because of these differences, it is critical to support a comprehensive adult education system that includes programs in community colleges, local educational agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), correctional institutions, and universities. The ICCB and community college system were established to serve all areas of the State, and adults increasingly chose the colleges and their many centers and community sites as the institutions that meet their needs for education and occupational skills. The same has occurred in adult education. The migration of students to community colleges for adult education and family literacy programs has grown to 70 percent of the statewide total units of instruction.

Community-based organizations have a long and successful record of working with special cultural and economic populations to meet their particularly urgent needs for basic skills and ESL instruction. It is important that these organizations be supported to continue this contribution. Likewise, public schools and regional offices of education play important local roles in providing instruction and GED testing which should also be supported.

Maintaining diverse geographic distribution of learning sites is essential to reach the growing number of people needing adult education programs. Instruction is currently provided at more than 400 sites throughout Illinois. Programs in a variety of locations, regardless of program size, are necessary to accommodate the State's varying population density from Chicago to Cairo, Illinois. Programs must continue to be available close to students to ensure that all Illinois residents in need have access to adult education.

Student Services and Support

Student services and support are very often the factors that make the difference between success and disappointment for adult education students. Even when programs are conveniently located, many adult education students face persistent problems with access to transportation, child care, and other services. These support services must be close at hand to enable students to attend and complete adult education programs. Strong student services and support systems for adult education would include:

- one-stop employment and training centers
- transition assistance to further education
- job placement and follow-up services
- assessment and testing services
- tutoring services
- financial aid services
- transportation assistance
- child care, student-parent options, infant care, early childhood education and care, and care for sick kids
- counseling and guidance
- attendance and retention assistance
- minority support services
- non-native and immigrant support services
- disabled adult services
- veterans services
- older learners services
- displaced homemakers programs and services
- single parent programs and services
- dislocated workers programs and services
- unemployed worker/welfare client services
- underemployed worker services
- career information services and centers
- special developmental/remedial reading, math and writing assistance centers
- resource centers and libraries

These comprehensive services are available for students in community college adult education programs and other providers offer some similar services. The ICCB supports coordinating the support resources of all adult education providers and the Illinois Employment

and Training Centers. In this way, students wishing to pursue adult education and family literacy, occupational and workforce programs, higher levels of education, and employment would have more comprehensive services available at more locations, a basic principle of access to adult education programs.

Teaching and Learning

The teaching and learning processes are paramount in adult education. Malcolm Knowles, acknowledged expert in adult education, identifies the basic difference between how children and adults learn. He states that children look to the future and are “subject-centered” in their frame of mind about education. Therefore, teachers teach children. Adults, however, come to education trying to cope with life situations and their frame of mind is “problem-centered.” Educators must use methods that assist adults to learn. Children are taught under conditions of compulsory attendance while adults are voluntary learners. Adults must be encouraged to remain motivated to learn and see the direct benefits of their effort if they are to continue to attend and complete.

All aspects of administration, program improvement, delivery, and accountability of adult education must be based on the understanding that the students are adults who are trying to “catch up” on the skills and knowledge they have not previously acquired. Some students need to gain urgently needed English language skills or to qualify for citizenship in their new country. Students testified that their goals are to gain the basic skills needed for employment, to get a better job, to become full participants in their communities, and to support their families.

The effectiveness of adult education rests on a foundation of adult education theory, methods, research, and professional development of instructors, staff, and leadership. Continually building on this foundation and coordinating the educational strengths of this program with workforce development means adult education can and will continue to make a major contribution to the success of individuals, families, and businesses.

Adult education instructors are not traditional teachers; they are advisors, counselors, mentors, managers, and educational innovators sharing in the learning processes of adult students. As said in testimony, the majority teach part-time, having come to adult education from a variety of backgrounds and teaching experiences. Undergraduate preparation in teaching adult education is not available in Illinois. Therefore, adult education instructors and support staff need strong professional development. Sharing best practices and research among colleagues and technical assistance from the State level are valuable activities. The Adult Education Service and Professional Development Centers should be expanded and connected to graduate-level adult education resources available statewide through the State’s distance learning network. The Adult Education Advisory Council, Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association, and Adult Education Area Planning Councils should be supported in their successful activities to assist adult education.

Family literacy is an important component of adult education. It strengthens the skills of whole families and creates greater expectations for learning. Since the mid-1960s, the ICCB and community colleges have been writing curricula, delivering courses, and offering activities for parents and for parents and children to learn together. Aside from ISBE-administered funds for family literacy and Even Start programs, many other federal grants and State funds are used to provide family basic skills initiatives. For instance, federal VISTA funds for “America Reads” support initiatives to reach Governor George Ryan’s goal that all children will read by the third grade; federal funds support Headstart programs; and ICCB recently received a one million dollar

grant from the U.S. Department of Public Health to help welfare clients and the working poor gain the skills to enter high demand allied health occupations.

System Design and Delivery

As late as the 1970s, most adult education took place in schools that were not created for the education of adults. Consequently, adult education was often a part of and subordinate to a larger enterprise with different priorities. With the creation of a statewide system of community colleges, the majority of adult education is now delivered through these institutions. It is important to again emphasize that the ICCB recognizes, values, and supports the variety of providers that comprise the adult education system. They each have strengths and roles in the system and contribute to the success of adult education students in Illinois. If administration is moved to the ICCB, this diversity of providers will be strongly supported, including acquiring State funds for community-based organizations.

The adult education system must be aligned closely with all the programs and support services as learners make the transition into the best next step for each individual---work, further education, or occupational training. The system must include all the programs needed and be highly productive. In addition, the system must continually monitor its success in meeting the needs of its two most important customers---students and employers.

The ICCB believes that the following principles are important to continuous program improvement in the adult education system:

- Preserve a diverse and comprehensive delivery system including community colleges, local educational agencies, community-based organizations, correctional institutions, and universities.
- Assure the equitable award of funds based on performance while retaining base funding to assure that funds follow the student.
- Retain centralized contracting between eligible providers and the state administering agency.
- Incorporate the WIA benchmarks into the State Plan for Adult Education and Family Literacy to measure successful outcomes for students, the State, and the federal government.
- Protect continued service to adults at the lowest education levels.
- Continue high-quality technical assistance at the State and local levels, including the expertise of current adult education State staff.
- Encourage short-term and long-range planning supported by program evaluation.
- Encourage more coordination of adult education and student support services.
- Expand support for professional development to all providers.

Administrative Experience and Capacity

The ICCB is the State agency created by law to administer the fiscal, programmatic, policy, and accountability functions of the community college system. The scope of this administrative responsibility is the same as that of the ISBE for the public school system. Recent legal opinion is that each agency has no more nor less regulatory authority than the other. The Governor must identify the lead agency for Adult Education and Family Literacy, Title II of

WIA, and the General Assembly must act to assign these responsibilities and grant needed authorities to an agency.

In 1996, through legislative action, ISBE and ICCB entered into an adult education interagency agreement. In the recent testimony, it was stated that the two agencies are equal partners in this agreement. In fact, the agreement gives the ICCB no decision-making authority, no oversight responsibilities, nor funds to support the administration of community college programs that provide 70 percent of adult education instruction in the State.

As particularly evidenced in the sections of this report on Philosophy, Leadership and State Advocacy, and Accountability, the ICCB has the focus, mission, leadership ability, programmatic expertise, administrative capacity, and record of success to administer adult education programs in Illinois. In addition, the administrative agency must have the confidence and cooperation of a significant number of State leaders who care about adult education and are eager to work to improve and expand adult education budgets and programs. For example, Paul Vallas, CEO of the Chicago Public Schools testified that “Adult education needs a focus and I think the ICCB is uniquely qualified to provide it with that focus.....clearly putting adult education and all adult education responsibilities under the ICCB is a positive....The bottom line is I really think that someone needs to take ownership for this program and prioritize this program.”

Accountability

The ICCB has voluntarily implemented performance-based funding in the distribution of unrestricted general revenue funds. The ICCB has been recognized by the American Association of Community Colleges as one of the five leading agencies in the country in performance initiatives. Accountability information is collected on student enrollment, progress, completion, and job placement, as well as information on faculty and staff, courses, and curricula. All courses, programs, and academic, administrative, and support units are evaluated in terms of need, quality, and cost. These data are used to monitor outcomes and promote program and institutional improvement.

The ICCB is a founding participant in the development of the Illinois Common Performance Management System (ICPMS) along with six other State agencies. The ICPMS is a nationally recognized effort to establish a performance measurement system across workforce development programs and providers around the principles of joint accountability, outcomes, quality assurance, and continuous improvement. The ICCB helped develop the adult education measures and measurement strategies, and has contributed information about adult education students since the system’s inception.

Currently, community colleges must report full student and financial data to both the ISBE and the ICCB. The burden placed on community colleges by dual oversight and reporting to two agencies should end. Reporting systems should be consolidated. This would eliminate duplicate reporting and create consistency among data from different types of providers. It would also enable adult education to be consistently evaluated and facilitate full reporting of adult education achievements on a statewide basis.

The ICCB currently supports delivery of over 70% of the total adult education units of instruction, which have produced 80% of the performance achievement in ISBE-administered federal and State-funded programs. However, only a portion of all students receiving instruction are counted each year. Using other funds acquired by the hard work of providers, there are

thousands of adults receiving adult education coursework and services who are not included in these statistics. Consolidated administration of adult education programs will result in accountability that truly reflects the adult education delivered in Illinois, consistent expectations for high performance, and will streamline administrative and accountability functions.

Conclusion

For the third time in ten years, questions have been raised about the State-level administration of adult education and family literacy. The persistence of this question indicates the need for a new way to look for an answer. This paper has presented the ICCB's philosophy and strategies in key policy areas that expand the view of adult education to encompass a greater emphasis on and appreciation for its role in workforce development.

1. **Philosophy.** The ICCB believes that strong and diverse adult education programs will enhance students' skills and quality of life while helping local businesses improve their ability to compete by expanding the skilled labor force.
2. **Leadership.** Adult education must be made a high priority for the State and will be a top priority within the ICCB so that the program can fulfill its potential as a primary intervention to improve educational and economic opportunities in Illinois.
3. **Workforce Development.** The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Illinois House Resolution 304, and Governor George Ryan's initiative to examine education and workforce development program administration rightly draws all aspects of adult education into relationship with workforce development and postsecondary education. With its strategic role and expertise in adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce development, the ICCB is best prepared to lead this expanded relationship.
4. **Access.** Because of the State's diverse population, demographics, geography, and economy, the ICCB believes that the adult education system must be comprehensive, incorporating the strengths of all types of public and private sector providers to meet the diverse needs of Illinois adult students.
5. **Student Services and Support.** Support services are often the factors that make the difference between success and disappointment for adult education students. The ICCB will coordinate the extensive support services of community colleges with those of other adult education providers and the Illinois Employment and Training Centers to ensure that adult students have every chance to succeed.
6. **Teaching and Learning.** Adult education must be grounded in the teaching strategies and learning styles that are most effective with adults. The best leadership for these programs comes from the ICCB whose focus is the effective teaching of adults. Because of the specific educational needs of adult students, professional development for instructors and staff is extremely important. The ICCB supports expanded availability of professional development resources.

7. System Design and Delivery. The ICCB believes that the following are important principles to guide the adult education system continuous pro-gram improvement: diverse and comprehensive providers, equitable award of funds, centralized contracting, incorporation of the Workforce Investment Act benchmarks, protecting service to adults at low educational levels, high quality technical assistance, short- and long-range planning based on evaluation, coordination with other agencies, and expanded professional development.
8. Administrative Experience. As particularly evidenced in the sections of this report on Philosophy, Leadership and State Advocacy, and Accountability, the ICCB has the focus, mission, leadership ability, programmatic expertise, administrative capacity, and record of success to administer adult education programs in Illinois. In addition, the ICCB has the confidence and cooperation of a significant number of State leaders who care about adult education and are eager to work with the ICCB to improve and expand adult education programs and budgets.