Utah State Board of Education

SERVING 16 TO 18 YEAR OLD STUDENTS IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

K-12 education is generally the best option for students between the ages of 16 to 18. In certain situations, however, adult education may be an appropriate alternative to keep high school-aged students progressing toward secondary school completion. Adult education personnel should work closely with high school counselors and administrators to ensure the proper placement of high school students and facilitate a smooth transition to adult education when appropriate.

Situations when adult education may be the best option may include, but are not limited to:

- When a student is unable to succeed in the traditional K-12 setting and desires to pursue an alternative path.
- When a student has financial responsibilities that require an alternative schedule to accommodate employment.
- When a student's postsecondary goals align with the outcomes of adult education.
- When a student is seeking a General Educational Development (GED®) or needs to access a 24-credit high school diploma.
- When the traditional school environment causes distress and anxiety.

Students moving to adult education should feel empowered and supported. Adult education should be presented as a viable alternative for secondary completion and not as a punishment.

As a key part of their role, adult education program directors should find ways to advocate for school-aged students to stay in K-12 settings, including working with K-12 administrators to establish an appropriate referral process for all school-aged students. When possible, schools should utilize multiple interventions designed to meet the needs of students so that students will remain engaged in high school before discussing adult education as a possibility. Adult education programs should work to provide eligible school-aged students with the highest quality educational services possible when, despite efforts to keep students engaged in K-12 settings, the student and parents determine adult education is their desired placement.

REFERRAL PROCESS

Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) should develop a referral process for school-aged students moving to adult education. The referral process should include all stakeholders (student, parent/guardian, counselors/administrators, and a representative from the adult education program) to ensure that the student and their parent/guardian are aware of all options available to them and to determine the best educational path for the student. Referring schools should provide as much information about the student to adult education programs as possible to ensure student success, including safe school violations and Individualized Education Program (IEPs) or 504s.

When referring students to adult education, consideration should be given to the additional resources offered in K-12 schools that are not available in adult education, such as transportation, school breakfast and lunch, social workers, counselors, etc.

The referral process should include a way to track how many students are referred to adult education, how many of the referred students enroll in adult education, and how many successfully graduate. Tracking this process will provide increased accuracy in reporting successful outcomes for adult education students. In addition, tracking the students can provide clarity in the effectiveness of the referral process, thereby creating opportunities for continuous improvement.

TIMING FOR REFERRALS

Students can be referred to adult education programs at any time once the student has turned 16 years of age. However, the individual needs of the student should be considered when making the decision to refer the student to adult education, possibly resulting in different timing for each student. Some factors to consider when developing a referral plan include which courses a student may be interested in or needs to complete in a K-12 school setting and which courses are available in adult education. Additionally, the impact on a student's social and emotional needs should be considered when determining whether adult education is the best option for the student. Referrals to adult education should always be centered on finding the best way to meet all the student's needs.

DUAL ENROLLMENT

During the referral process, it should be determined whether the student will be dually enrolled in adult education and K-12 or if they will withdraw from K-12 to enroll in adult education. In the latter case, the High School Equivalency (HSE) Candidate and Adult Education Eligibility Form must be completed.

Adult education programs should work with their Business Administrator (BA) to receive a prorated portion of the regular weighted pupil unit (WPU) for the time the student is enrolled and engaged in the adult education program, up to 990 hours of instruction per fiscal/program year (Utah Adult Education Policies and Procedures Guide, Section 9: Students with Disabilities as incorporated by reference in R277-733).

JURISDICTION

Adult education programs should enroll eligible students who are interested in their program regardless of which school district the student lives in. Adult education programs should work to decrease barriers to student enrollment and engagement, including creating a welcoming culture within the program.

EXIT CODES AND OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH REPORT

To ensure accurate reporting for school-aged adult education students who complete a secondary diploma or GED®, adult education programs should work closely with data personnel within the program's LEA to update the students' exit codes. For instance, students who have completed their GED® should be assigned the exit code GG, while those who have earned an adult education diploma should be assigned the exit code GC. Exit codes should be updated for all those who complete a secondary diploma by September 30 following the program year their cohort graduated. To facilitate accurate reporting, the Out of School Youth (OOSY) report is compiled twice a year and distributed through the Data Warehouse. The OOSY report lists all school-aged students who complete a GED® or earn a secondary diploma through adult education.

COMPETENCY

Acknowledging the value of lived experience is a core value of adult education. Programs are encouraged to utilize demonstrated competency-based options such as awarding credit for prior learning or allowing students to test out of portions of coursework. As school-aged students usually do not have the same depth of lived experience as other adult learners, programs may choose to limit the amount of awarded credit these students can receive. If so, this should be included in the program's competency-based credit policy.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Adult education programs are required to have an attendance policy explicitly outlining the program's expectations. Since dual enrolled students are still enrolled in K-12 schools, programs may have different expectations for attendance for dual enrolled students than other adult education students. If so, these expectations should be clearly outlined in the program's policy guide and students should be made aware of those expectations.

Because school-aged students may differ in maturity from older adult education students, expectations for behavior should be clearly communicated to students as they enter the program.

PARENTAL CONSENT

Parental consent is crucial in ensuring that minors are protected, and their best interests are upheld. Parental consent provides a legal and ethical framework that allows parents to be actively involved in their child's education and other significant decisions. For instance, in the context of adult education programs or taking the GED® test, parental consent ensures that the student and the parent have been counseled about their educational options and the potential consequences associated with their decisions. This involvement helps in making informed decisions, safeguarding the child's well-being, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements.

Programs should create enrollment processes that ensure written parental consent for school-aged students to enroll in the program is collected during intake. If a program plans to administer a survey regarding an early warning system, a survey with social emotional learning questions, or a school climate survey, the program will need to obtain prior written parental consent at the time the student registers (see Utah Code 53E-9-203). Additionally, recent legislation (Utah Code 53E-9-205) requires parental consent for adult education programs to alter a school-aged student's education record regarding a student's gender identity. This means that the sex and pronouns for a school-aged student that is entered into Utah's Adult Education Student Information System (UASIS) should match the student's birth certificate unless parental consent is given. Informed written parental consent will also need to be collected for most mental health services provided to school-aged students (Utah Code 53G-9-214).

By enrolling their student in adult education, parents do not waive their right to their student's educational records. Adult education programs should develop procedures for ensuring that parents of students under the age of 18 have access to student records, when desired. Additionally, adult education programs should be cognizant that once the student turns 18, parental access to records is terminated unless the student has provided prior written consent.

Students who are emancipated, married, or identified as McKinney-Vento students do not require parental consent, even if they are not 18 years of age. Emancipated students are legally recognized as adults and can make educational decisions without needing parental approval. Similarly, married students are considered adults and can provide consent for their own educational decisions. McKinney-Vento students, who are homeless or unaccompanied minors, have specific rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which allows them to enroll in school and access educational services without parental consent. These provisions ensure that these students can continue their education and receive necessary support without unnecessary barriers. Adult education programs should work closely with the district's McKinney-Vento personnel to make sure students are identified appropriately.

Another consideration programs need to make for school-aged students is who is the custodial parent. A custodial parent is the one who has primary physical

custody of the student, meaning the student lives with them most of the time. This parent typically has the legal right to make educational decisions for the student. In joint custody situations, both parents may share these decisions. Understanding these considerations ensures that the custodial parent's role is respected and that the student's well-being is prioritized.

RETURNING TO K-12

Students have the right to return to K-12 until their cohort graduates or until a secondary credential (diploma or GED®) is earned. Students with an IEP have the right to return to K-12 until they complete a credit-based diploma or age out of special education. Students and parents should be made aware of this right when students are referred to adult education and it should be considered when developing a transition plan to adult education. Adult education programs are accredited and any credits earned while in adult education must be added to the student's transcript.

BENEFITS

Enrolling in an adult education program that does not offer students the opportunity to attend full time can have significant implications for federal and state benefits, including Social Security benefits. In addition, part-time enrollment may impact eligibility for other state benefits, such as Medicaid or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It is essential for students to understand these potential impacts and plan accordingly.

TESTING

Students who are dual enrolled in adult education and K-12 may still be required to participate in K-12 mandated testing. Adult education programs with dual enrolled students should work with their LEAs testing coordinators to determine which students need to be tested.

Dual enrolled students should expect to follow program policies regarding the administration of National Reporting System (NRS) approved assessments in addition to any required K-12 testing.

MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS

Multilingual learners (MLs) frequently encounter unique challenges in the education system, often resulting in credit deficiencies. These students require a multifaceted approach to support their academic success, encompassing a variety of scaffolding and resources to help them meet graduation requirements across all subject areas. Adult education programs can play a crucial role in this support structure.

However, it's important to address the potential misuse of adult education. Local education agencies LEAs) may sometimes consider transferring MLs to adult education programs prematurely, even when these students remain eligible for traditional high school. Such transfers can unintentionally deprive MLs of the valuable social experiences and extracurricular opportunities that high school offers. Social integration with similarly aged peers is integral to their overall development and well-being.

Adult education can be strategically used as an effective scaffold to bolster MLs' progress within their traditional high school program. For instance, as space and district policy permits, MLs could be enrolled in evening English language acquisition courses that supplement the instruction received in high school during the day. This approach allows students to remain engaged in the high school environment while receiving targeted support in areas where they need additional assistance. Furthermore, LEAs could consider braiding K-12 resources with adult education resources to support shared full time contracted positions for MLs. This model could facilitate MLs transition to adult education who are unable to complete graduation requirements with their cohort, thus ensuring they have ample time and resources to earn their diploma.

Adult education courses can also be used to help support ML students in employment, when the employer seeks to have employees improve their English skills.