Adults Learning New Skills for the Workplace: Lessons from Research

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Today’s Presentation

- US context for preparing adults for work
- Career pathways approaches with low-skilled adults
- Findings from research on adults learning skills for the workplace
  - *Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Transition to Education and Training Initiative (OPABS)*
  - *Oregon Transition Planning Process (TPP)*
US Education System

Mainstream Education and Training
- Post-Doctoral Study and Research
- Doctoral Degree Study
- Professional Schools (Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Theology, etc.)
- Masters Degree Study
- Undergraduate Programs
- Voc/Tech Inst.
- Community College
- Four Year High School
- Senior High
- Junior High
- Combined Junior and Senior High
- Middle School
- Elementary or Primary
- Kindergarten
- Nursery or Pre-Kindergarten

Adult Education & Continuing Training
- Vocational & Technical Training
  - Credit Credentials (Degrees, Certificates)
  - Non-Credit Certificates
  - Apprenticeship
- Overlapping Programs
  - Dual Enrollment in Adult Education & Postsecondary Education
  - Pre-Apprenticeship
  - Work-Based Education
- Adult Education & Literacy
  - High School Equivalency, High School Completion
  - Basic/Foundational Skills
  - English as a Second Language
THREE CORE FEATURES OF A CAREER PATHWAY

2. Multiple entry points - for both well prepared students and targeted populations
   - e.g., apprenticeship
   - e.g., postsecondary system
   - e.g., military or civilian workplace
   - e.g., high school or CTE
   - e.g., ABE, TANF, or workforce system

Increasing skills, competencies and credentials informed by industry/employers

1. Well-connected and transparent education, training, credentials, and support services
   - e.g., certificate, diploma
   - e.g., license, industry credential

2. Bridge(s)

3. Multiple exit points
   - 1st Job in Career Path
   - 2nd Job in Career Path
   - 3rd Job in Career Path
   - Nth Job in Career Path
Career Pathways Approaches with Adult Basic Education Learners

- Pre-Bridge and Bridge Programs
  - Education
  - Career planning
  - Financial Education & Planning
  - Technical training
  - Support services

- Integrated Education & Training Models (IET)
  - Integrated basic education skills and training
  - Pre-apprenticeship programs
Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Initiative (OPABS)

- **Developer & Funder**: Oregon’s Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development
- **Research Consultant**: Abt Associates
- **Participants**: 12 ABS programs in community colleges
- **Began**: 2004
- **Enrolled**: 5,955 ABS learners enrolled in OPABS courses during 2009-2010 to 2013-2014
Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills Initiative: Key Components

- Adult Basic Skills Career Pathways
- Coordination: ABS & College Departments, Employment Services
- Program Management, Professional Develop., Data Systems
- Curriculum Integrating Basic Skills & Occupational Information
- College & Career Awareness, Learner Supports
Oregon’s Adult Basic Skills (ABS) Career Pathways Model

- Recruitment & Referral
  - Enrollment in ABS-GED
  - Referral from ESOL, VESL
  - Referral from WorkSource
    - Displaced Workers, Core Clients
  - Referral from Colleges (CTE, Dev. Ed.), other providers

- Orientation in ABS/ASE
  - Placement Test, Pre-Test
  - College Placement Test
  - Goal Setting & Risk Analysis
  - Placement in ABS/ASE Courses

- Instruction
  - Accelerated instruction--Pre-Bridge & Bridge Reading, Math, and Writing
  - Use of Contextualization
  - Career & College Awareness Course
  - Use of cohorts, learning communities
  - Dual enrollment in ABS and CTE

- Learner Outcomes & Further Participation
  - Earn CRC, Occupational Certificate (<1 Yr.)
  - Enroll in CTE or Academic Courses
  - Obtain or Help Gain Employment
  - Earn:
    - Occupational Certificate (> 1 Yr.)
    - PSE Credential

- GED/High School Dip.
- Advising, Support Services, & Transition Info.

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OPABS Initiative: Instruction

OPABS Courses

- Academic Skills
  Reading, Math, & Writing

- Psychosocial Skills
  Self-Direction, Self-Efficacy

- College & Career Knowledge

- Skills Contextualized
  to CTE Course Content for
  High-demand Occupations
6 Academically Accelerated Courses; Career & College Awareness Course

**Course Materials**
- Syllabus & Outline
- Scripted Lesson Plans, Instructor Notes, Learner Materials
- Courses incorporated applications from high-demand industries
Career and College Awareness
Course Outline

Lesson 1
Welcome to the Course

Lesson 2
Getting to Know Skills & Interests

Lessons 3 & 4
Career Choices, Considerations

Lesson 5
Exploring In-Demand Careers

Lessons 6, 7
Educational Requirements
Connecting Career & Education

Lesson 8
Goal Setting & College Resources

Lessons 9 & 10
Creating Plan, Looking Toward Future
Evaluation of Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills (OPABS) Initiative

- **Study of Effects of Accelerated Basic Skills Instruction on Adults’ GED® Attainment and Enrollment in Postsecondary Education** (IES: R305H140108)

- Grantee: Abt Associates; Judith Alamprese, Principal Investigator

- State Partner: Oregon’s Higher Education Coordinating Commission, Community Colleges & Workforce Development

Two-Phase OPABS Study

- **Part 1: Descriptive Study**
  - What are the characteristics of OPABS learners?
  - What are learners outcomes in basic skills development and GED® attainment?
  - What are the postsecondary outcomes for OPABS learners?

- **Part 2: Quasi-Experimental Study**
  - How do the outcomes of OPABS learners compare to the outcomes of similar learners who were not served by the OPABS initiative?

- Colleges Participating: 10 ABS programs
- Sample of OPABS learners analyzed: 4,203 learners
- 15% (614) of learners entered OPABS courses with a GED®, high school diploma, or further education
Descriptive Study: Did OPABS Learners Develop Skills?

Learners who took OPABS Bridge Reading: Standardized test score reading gain in SD units: \( .37 \)

Learners who took OPABS Pre-Bridge & Bridge Math: Standardized test score math gain in SD units: \( .70 \)

68% of OPABS learners who took GED® test earned a GED

29% of OPABS learners took at least 1 postsecondary course

3% earned a postsecondary certificate
Descriptive Study: OPABS Learners’ Postsecondary Participation

Number of postsecondary courses OPABS learners took:

- 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45%

- 1 Course
- 2 to 6 courses
- 7 or more courses
Factors Associated with OPABS Learners’ Earning of College Credits

Learners who were more likely to earn transferable or occupational credits:

- Had pre-test score at or above the 8th grade equivalent and completed Bridge Math
- Took a College and Career Awareness course and did not have secondary education as a goal at intake
OPABS Quasi-Experimental Study

- Compared ABS learners in OPABS Courses matched to ABS learners in non-OPABS Courses

- ABS comparison group:
  - Attended same ABS programs during the same year and term
  - Were enrolled in comparable reading or math course

- OPABS learners and comparison group were followed from year of enrollment in OPABS (09-10 to 13-14) through 2015-2016
Findings from Quasi-Experimental Study

- OPABS and Comparison students made significant gains on CASAS reading and math tests; no differences between groups
- While the groups of OPABS and Comparison students who had 2+ math courses were small; there were larger gains for treatment students
- Patterns of GED® test participation and completion similar for OPABS and comparison students
OPABS Comparative Study: Postsecondary Outcomes

Statistically Significant Outcomes

- % Earned Cert./Degree
- % Completed Transfer. Credit
- % Enrolled in Transfer. Credit
- % Took Postsec. Course

Comparison Group vs. OPABS
Transition Planning Process (TPP)

- Effects of Transition Planning Process (TPP) on Adult Basic Skills Learners’ GED® Attainment and Enrollment in Postsecondary Education (R305L170012)
- Abt Associates & Oregon Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development
- Funder: US Department of Education, IES
- 2017-2020
- Random assignment study: test use of text messages to prompt basic skills learners at critical points in basic skills participation—GED® attainment and enrollment in postsecondary education
## Transition Planning Process (TPP) Theory of Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Intervention (TPP) comprised of Transition Facilitators’</th>
<th>Mediators</th>
<th>Near-term Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-term Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS learners:</td>
<td>1. Enter ABS with CASAS reading or math score at 6th GE of higher</td>
<td>1. Number of interactions between TF &amp; ABS learners</td>
<td>1. Took one or more GED® subject tests</td>
<td>1. Accrued college credits in a postsecondary program of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do not have a high school diploma or equivalency</td>
<td>2. Content of interactions</td>
<td>2. GED® attainment</td>
<td>2. Attained post-secondary certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Have cell phone</td>
<td>Moderators</td>
<td>3. Enrolled in one or more post-secondary courses</td>
<td>3. Attained Associate Degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Target Population**: ABS learners:
  1. Enter ABS with CASAS reading or math score at 6th GE of higher
  2. Do not have a high school diploma or equivalency
  3. Have cell phone

- **Intervention (TPP)**: comprised of Transition Facilitators’:
  1. Advice, coaching, & information about GED® completion & postsec. participation
  2. Text messages to reinforce advice and prompt action

- **Mediators**:
  1. CASAS reading & math levels
  2. Learner demographics
  3. Goals

- **Near-term Outcomes**:
  1. Took one or more GED® subject tests
  2. GED® attainment
  3. Enrolled in one or more post-secondary courses

- **Long-term Outcomes**:
  1. Accrued college credits in a postsecondary program of study
  2. Attained post-secondary certificate
  3. Attained Associate Degree
Progress of TPP Project

- 3 Cohorts Completed
  - Spring and fall terms, 2018
  - Winter term 2019
  - 327 learners randomly assigned to texting or no texting
- Will collect follow-up outcome data 12 months after cohort begins
- Texts have prompted varied forms of communication with facilitators
- Texting is efficient means of communication
Thank you!