



CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Closing the Equity Gap for Adult Learners in California: 7 Promising Practices to Advance Student Outcomes

May 2024

Monique O. Ositelu, PhD

Barbara L. Endel, PhD

Maggie Snyder

Julie Clark

Emma Diaz, EdD

Debra D. Bragg, PhD



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Foreword</u>	3
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	4
<u>Executive Summary</u>	6
<u>Introduction</u>	11
<u>Findings</u>	20
<u>Future Research</u>	48
<u>Conclusion</u>	49
<u>Appendix A: Research Methodology</u>	50
<u>Appendix B: Definitions</u>	56
<u>Appendix C: About Barbara Endel Consulting</u>	58
<u>Appendix D: References and Data Sources</u>	60



FOREWORD

California’s workforce will need both youth and adults (whether returning to education or not) to access inclusive education pathways. The state-wide adult education system is currently serving over 600,000 learners. But we know there is a big challenge to reach the 6.8 Million adults who don’t yet have a credential. As such, accelerated learning models and implementing evidence-informed promising practices must be central to our collaborative state-wide commitment.

2014 was a pivotal year for California when the California Adult Education Program (CAEP) was formed by bringing together the two state-wide systems – community colleges and adult schools delivering adult education through the K-12 system. During the past decade, the partnership has never wavered- working together to support adult learners in jobs that provide living wages and engagement from California’s business and industry.

The convergence of leadership at the state level has been aligned and deeply committed to student equity. In fall 2023, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office released a future-looking call to action with *Vision 2030: A Roadmap for California Community Colleges*. Vision 2030 prioritizes skill-building for jobs that pay living wages, including putting a spotlight on promising practices included in this exciting research.

At the same time, the California Department of Education is in the midst of transforming California schools. Major goals include integrating new programs and innovations to support students, families, educators, and local educational agencies. The California Adult Education Program has three priorities to advance student outcomes that align with Vision 2030, including **Learner Transitions** – moving learners along in educational, career, or other pathways. **Program Development** - building relevant regional and local partnerships and advancing collaborations, leveraging funding, and implementing accelerated learning models, such as Integrated Education and Training (IET) and/or pre-apprenticeship models. **Equity** - building cultural awareness and responsiveness, addressing equity in the classroom and the achievement gap, and creating access, success, and transfer opportunities for underserved populations.

California is the world’s sixth-largest economy and necessitates being innovative and workforce-forward. CAEP Priorities and Vision 2030 calls on state, regional, and local leaders to keep building the necessary systems to break through traditional models and unlock the talent of our students.

There is a deep commitment to bringing forward our best thinking and resources for action and scale. The following report will help identify strategies based on promising practices to impact student outcomes.



Sonya Christian
Chancellor

Sonya Christian



Tony Thurmond
California Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Tony Thurmond





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our research team would like to thank the leadership of the entire California Adult Education Program (CAEP), including Peter Callas, Dr. Carolyn Zachry, Diana Batista and Neil Kelly from the California Department of Education and former Vice Chancellor Sandra Sanchez, Dean Gary Adams, Mayra Diaz, Cora Rainey, and Sanjay Mehta from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Interviewees spoke positively about partnerships between adult schools and community colleges. Growing regional partnerships within and across California are a direct reflection of advanced collaboration within the state CAEP leadership team.

This dedicated team has developed a strong workforce-forward vision, resulting in greater career mobility for all CAEP students. The strategic vision expands beyond program change to the transformation of CAEP's entire adult education system. It builds on a decades-long tradition of creating more opportunities for students to earn postsecondary and industry-recognized credentials.

We are grateful to the staff and students of the six community colleges and six adult schools who we interviewed. An extra thank you to the leaders who helped to plan our visits. We are grateful to the students who shared their stories from English Language Learning classes, as well as students participating in CTE programs and Adult Secondary Education programs. Their time and perspectives were instrumental for this report.

Special thanks to:

ABC Adult School	Nancy Amara, Principal, and Sergio Gumucio, Assistant Principal
Cerritos College	Graciela Vasquez, Continuing Education Instructional Dean
College of the Sequoias	Juan Vazquez, Dean of Student Support Services
Compton College	Lynell Wiggins, Director of Adult Education and Workforce Development
El Camino College	Jose Anaya, Dean Community Advancement and Business Training Center
Feather River College	Derek Lerch, Dean of Instruction and Chief Instructional Officer
Paramount Adult School	Yvonne Rodriguez, Principal
Plumas Unified School District	Steve Dutton, Teacher and Program Coordinator, and Mitch Rosin, Consultant
San Diego College of Continuing Education	Tina King, President, Shakerra Carter, Vice President of Student Services, and Kelly Henwood, Special Projects Manager and Regional Adult Education Consortium Lead
Sweetwater Union High School District	Jay Marquand, PhD, Director of Adult Education
Torrance Unified School District	Wayne Diulio, Director, and Ryan Whetstone, Principal
Visalia Unified School District	John Werner, Executive Director Sequoias Adult Education Consortium, and Tami Olson, Principal



Asset Framing In this study, we, the researchers, adopted an asset-based narrative that considers adults as valued learners. This approach affirms the California Community Colleges Vision 2030 and California Department of Education’s Asset-Based Pedagogies statement.¹

Given the importance of achieving greater equity in education and employment outcomes, we believe traditional terminology associated with adult education and career pathways needs to change. In this research, we replaced deficit terminology with an asset-based narrative that more honorably and accurately describes the adult learners within these adult education programs.

Funding This project was funded by the California Adult Education Program (CAEP) as part of its long-standing commitment to document and elevate effective practices to support student success. The California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) work to ensure students’ transitions into higher levels of learning and career mobility are advanced once in the labor force.

Disclaimer The content of this document reflects the views of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of CAEP, CDE, CCCCCO, or the interviewed participants from the six adult schools and six community colleges.

Suggested Citation Ositelu, M. O., Endel, B., Snyder, M., Clark, J., Diaz, E., & Bragg, D. D. (2024). California Adult Education Program Closing the Equity Gap for Adult Learners. Sacramento, CA.

Contact Barbara L. Endel, PhD (859) 640-4296, barbaraendel73@gmail.com

¹ “Ensuring equity for an increasingly diverse student population relies on today’s educators viewing student differences as assets and not deficits. Asset-Based Pedagogies view the diversity that students bring to the classroom, including culture, language, disability, socio-economic status, immigration status, and sexuality, as characteristics that add value and strength to classrooms and communities. Asset-Based Pedagogies recognize that the populations listed above are not mutually exclusive. Students can move fluidly between several different groups.” California Department of Education. (2023). Asset-based pedagogies. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/assetbasedpedagogies.asp>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Adult Education Program (CAEP) envisions the transformation of programs and services to prepare adult learners to be educationally and economically successful in the state's diverse regional economies. Twelve local adult education sites (six adult schools delivered by K-12 and six community colleges) from among more than 400 sites were selected for this promising practices research study. The study captured why and how student performance and employment outcomes at these 12 sites, especially for Students of Color, far exceeded state average metrics.

Seven promising practices emerged, along with an innovative 'convergence' model approach. The convergence model shows how these exemplar sites strategically applied the seven promising practices and other interventions across the entire student journey, both academically and non-academically.

The promising practices can be contextualized and applied to adult education sites (both within and outside of California) to build stronger student progression/transitions into college and careers. To learn more about California's unique system of adult education that has brought K-12 and community colleges together, please see the [Full Report](#).

Research Approach

In January 2023, our independent research team designed a qualitative research study with inductive and deductive coding from transcribed interviews to better understand the following:

1. How are selected CAEP sites serving learners in their adult education programs, especially Students of Color (African American, Hispanic, and Asian students)?²
2. What are the factors (e.g., practices, funding, structures, partnerships) that influence program behavior of the selected sites?

To select sites to conduct interviews, we started with all 71 regional consortia in California. We then narrowed the selection to 12 local program sites where direct services were being delivered to students, either attending an adult school or community college. The 12 CAEP local programs (six adult schools and six community colleges) served a percentage of diverse students equal or above the state demographics and met or exceeded state average outcomes across the four selected core metrics (see Box 1 and Figure 1). For a more detailed research methodology and analytic process, see [Appendix A](#).

Interviewees at the 12 sites included CAEP regional consortium leads, adult school principals, community college presidents and deans, CAEP program directors, job developers, transition specialists, student support services staff, students, faculty, and instructors. In all, we interviewed over 100 staff, faculty, and instructors across the 12 site visits and close to 100 students.

² These are the demographic categories used by the Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult Education Pipeline: Students and Programs. <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

FIGURE 1: The Selection Process of the 12 Local Programs

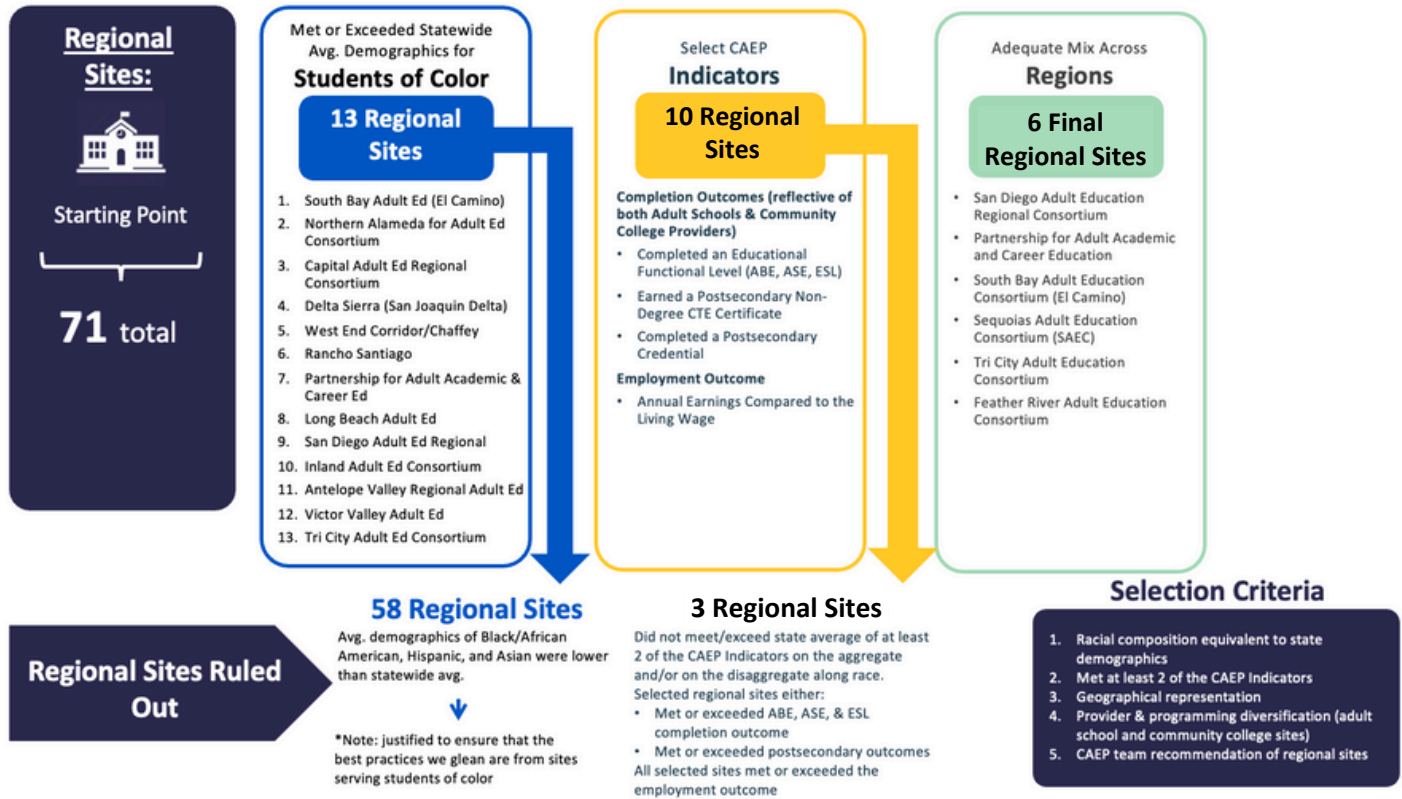


TABLE 1: 4 CAEP Core Performance Metrics State and Selected Site Averages

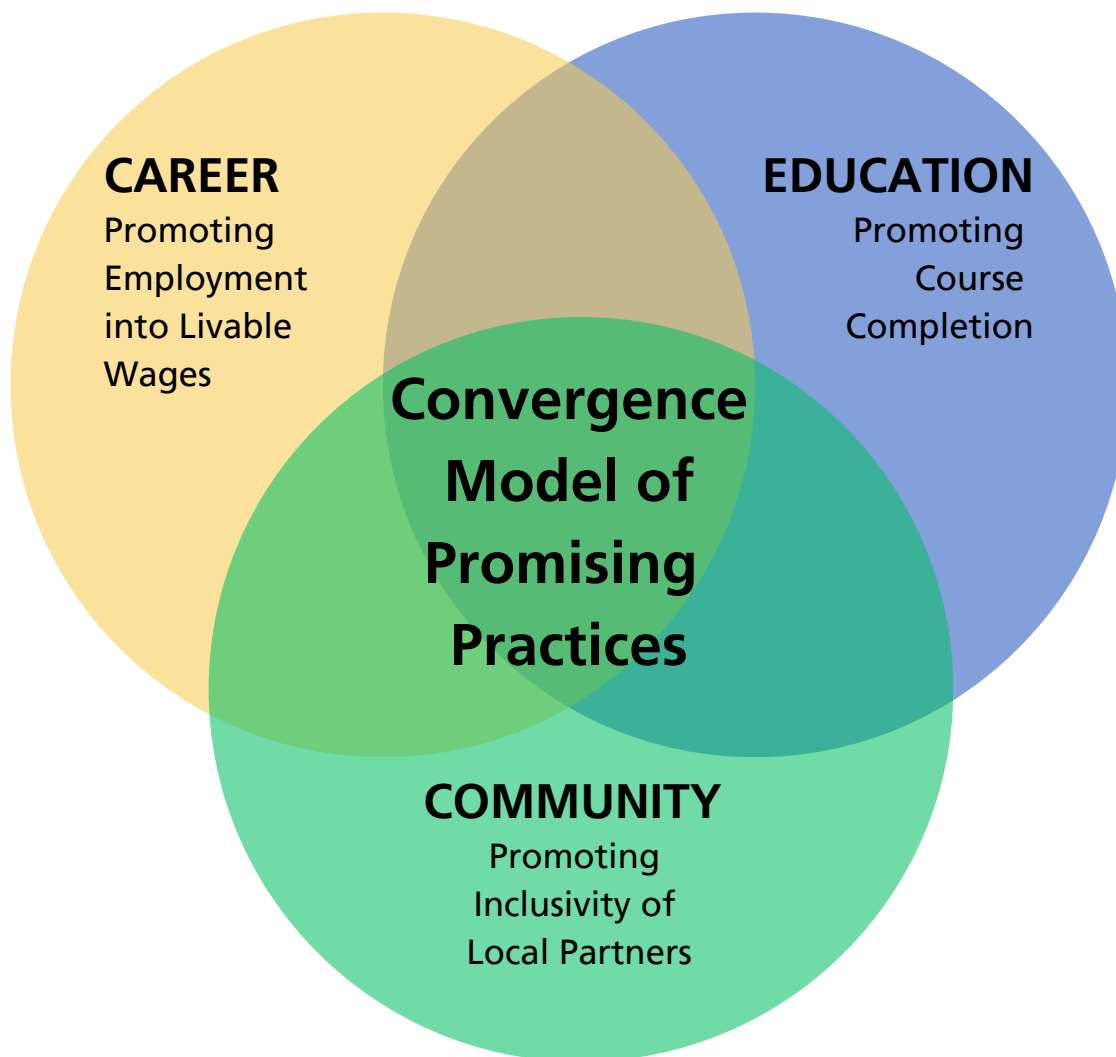
Performance Metrics	Functional Level Gain (2020-2021)	Non-degree Certificate Completed (2020-2021)	Postsecondary Credential Completed (2020-2021)	Living Wage (2019-2020)*
6 Regional Consortium average from which the 12 sites were selected	28%	20%	11%	43%
State Average	29%	10%	8%	35%
*This is likely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in subsequent years.				

Table 1 shows the state averages and aggregated averages of the 12 investigated sites. Data for the first three metrics is from 2020-2021, and 2019-2020 data was used for the final metric, as this was the most recent data posted to the state’s data system, LaunchBoard. It is important to note that this data is likely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Convergence Model

What factors enabled these sites to surpass state averages in completion and employment outcomes? Our findings indicate that the secret is simple—a comprehensive approach converging promising practices that span career, community, and education. We refer to this synergistic blend of career, community, and education collaboration as the Convergence Model of Promising Practices (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: The Convergence Model of Promising Practices



Our findings highlight seven converging promising practices within and across these three domains that participants in the selected local programs believe make a difference for adult learner success. Findings show sites are invested in the idea that practices that integrate components from each of these domains are more successful than when implemented alone.

The Seven Converging Promising Practices:

1 A Student Concierge Approach describes an institution's demonstrated commitment to a personalized, student-centered approach along all aspects of their on-site services, academic programming, and community engagement.

2 Intentional and Structured Regional Partnerships deliberately engage community colleges, adult schools, and communities through formalized collaboration, such as accelerated learning models, bridge programs, and staff transition specialists, to advance students along their chosen pathway.

3 Workforce-Forward Responsive Leaders Who Are 'Strategists' prioritize effective feedback mechanisms, demonstrate openness to innovative ideas, and emphasize professional development for staff and instructors at all levels to have the skills to improve learner success along completion and transition outcomes.

4 Data-Informed Decision-Making Beyond Compliance for Continuous Improvement involves collecting and utilizing a wide range of data to constructively share with all staff, instructors, students, adult school and community college partners, and community members to support the successful transition of students into higher levels of learning and/or employment.

5 Strategic Resource Allocation proactively pursues resources to support programs and redistributes funding as necessary.

6 Practices that Empower Students create a supportive learning environment across the entire student journey, ensuring all students have voice, agency, information, advocacy skills, and curricula necessary to fully participate in their programs and reach their academic and career goals.

7 Integrated Student Support Services are collaboratively designed to meet the unique needs of the community's student population.

Adult education is an ideal system within which to design and test an assortment of comprehensive or converging approaches to further meet students' needs and advance outcomes. The adult education system in California was a logical place to start the investigation, given it is the largest adult education system in the nation and offers a unique system consortium model of K-12 adult schools and community college non-credit programs.

Reaching Scale and Impact

What we have named the Convergence Model of Promising Practices emerged from our analysis of interviews with approximately 200 staff, students, instructors, and faculty from 12 adult schools and community colleges in California. These stakeholders described a connection between career, community, and education at their sites. Our findings highlight seven converging promising practices within and across these three domains that stakeholders in the selected local programs believe make a difference for adult learner success. The most successful interventions connected a comprehensive set of strategies to improve the lives of adult learners.

These findings offer hope, demonstrating how the seven promising practices, when integrated, can increase the number of CAEP students, especially Students of Color, succeeding in education and beyond.

Following this report, we are committed, along with the CAEP staff, to make the research actionable. Our team will use the findings to inform state-wide professional development services. We will also coordinate with the state's cadre of technical assistance providers (TAPs) in 2024-25 and offer presentations about the research at several conferences and webinars in the spring and summer of 2024.

Meet Mohammed: Accelerated Learning Models Connect Students to Good Jobs

Mohammed had dreams of becoming an electrician. As a single father with a criminal record, he faced significant personal challenges and feared that his dreams might not come true. Despite these obstacles, Mohammed never gave up. He learned about the San Diego College of Continuing Education and sought career guidance there. After several conversations, he enrolled in the Apprenticeship Readiness Program (ARP).

Mohammed successfully completed the 12-week ARP, earning several certifications including the Multi Core Craft (MC3) Certification. Upon graduating, he transitioned to an electrician training program to further prepare for becoming an electrician apprentice. During the program graduation, Mohammad brought his son and thanked the program faculty and college staff for believing in him during one of his low points and guiding him to achieve his dream of becoming an electrician.

Background

The California Adult Education Program (CAEP) envisions the transformation of programs and services to prepare adult learners to be educationally and economically successful in the state's diverse regional economies.

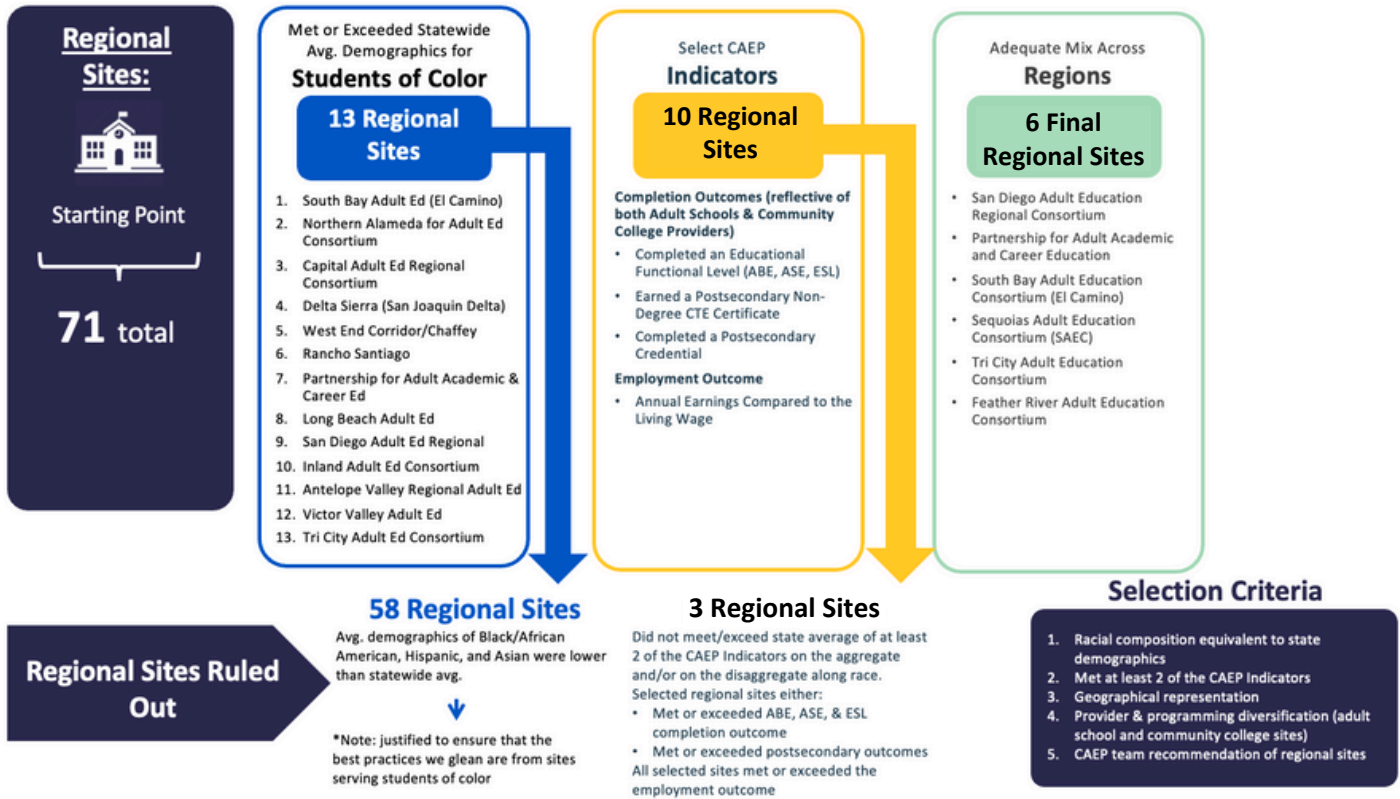
Many pathways in adult education can lead to good jobs, but what if these opportunities could be made more accessible and equity-driven? How can adult education better support learners in meeting their goals? In January 2023, our independent research team, along with the CAEP team and a group of leaders from the the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and California Department of Education (CDE), designed a qualitative research study to better understand the following:

1. How are selected CAEP sites serving learners in their adult education programs, especially Students of Color (African American, Hispanic, and Asian students)?³
2. What are the factors (e.g., policies, funding, structures, partnerships) that influence program behavior of the selected sites?

To select sites to conduct interviews, we started with all 71 regional consortia, which are comprised of 451 member sites (local programs, such as adult schools, community college noncredit, English Language Learning in community libraries, and services within the correctional system, among others where services are delivered). From there, we identified 13 consortia that met or exceeded state-wide demographics for Students of Color (see Figure 1). We then narrowed to 10 regional consortia based on CAEP performance and employment indicators, geographic representation, and CAEP team recommendations. This process resulted in six regional consortia from which we selected local CAEP programs at 12 sites (six community colleges and six adult schools) that serve a percentage of diverse students equal to or above the percentage in the same student demographic group for CAEP overall and meet or exceed state average outcomes across the four selected core metrics (see Box 1 and Figure 3).

³ These are the demographic categories used by the Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult Education Pipeline: Students and Programs. <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

FIGURE 3: The Selection Process of the 12 Local Programs



BOX 1: CAEP Performance Metrics

Four CAEP performance metrics used for selecting 12 local programs across 450+ potential sites:

Student Completion Outcomes:

1. Completed an educational functional level (ABE, ASE, ESL)
2. Earned a postsecondary non-degree certificate
3. Completed a postsecondary credential

Student Employment Outcomes:

4. Annual earnings compared to the living wage

In many cases, the local programs reported outcomes two or three times higher than the state average, and in other cases, the outcomes barely exceeded the state average. However, overall results for the 12 sites demonstrate higher student outcomes across these performance indicators, with some room for improvement.

Our research approach centered on qualitative interviews intentionally targeting administrative and instructional staff across a continuum of roles. We interviewed CAEP regional consortium leads, adult school principals, community college presidents and deans, CAEP program directors, job developers, transition specialists, student support services staff, students, faculty, and instructors. In all, we engaged over 100 staff, faculty, and instructors across the 12 site visits and close to 100 students.

The outcome is this evidence-based report elevating our findings to share across California and the nation.

The Convergence Model

In California, just over 30% of Adult education students earn a local living wage.⁴ Yet, within the 13 Adult Education Regional Consortia where student demographics mirror the state's racial-ethnic diversity, this statistic rises to an average of 40%, reaching up to 60% for one regional consortium.⁵

California's state-wide average for adult education students indicates that 10% of CAEP students earn a postsecondary non-degree CTE certificate, and another 8% complete a postsecondary credential.⁶ In contrast, adult learners in CAEP programs within the 13 Adult Regional Consortia that serve African American, Hispanic, and/or Asian students at or above the state's racial-ethnic diversity, outperform state outcomes.

The average CTE and postsecondary completion rates are 18% and 9%, respectively. These results are 8% higher for CTE and 1% higher for postsecondary completion than for CAEP programs overall.⁷

Table 2 provides the averages for the performance metrics from the six regional consortia where the 12 investigated sites are located.



"Collaboration is at the heart of our success. We work closely with the college... and with [local] businesses... to ensure students receive the support they need."

-Director at ABC Adult School



4 Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult Education Pipeline Overview.<https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

5 Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult Education Pipeline Overview.<https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

6 Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult Education Pipeline Overview.<https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

7 Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult Education Pipeline Overview.<https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

TABLE 2: 4 CAEP Core Performance Metrics State and Selected Site Averages

Performance Metrics	Functional Level Gain (2020-2021)	Non-degree Certificate Completed (2020-2021)	Postsecondary Credential Completed (2020-2021)	Living Wage (2019-2020)*
6 Regional Consortium average from which the 12 sites were selected	28%	20%	11%	43%
State Average	29%	10%	8%	35%
*This is likely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in subsequent years.				

Career, Community, and Education: Converging Promising Practices

What sets these regional consortia apart and enables them to surpass state averages in completion and employment outcomes? **Our findings indicate that the secret is simple—a comprehensive approach converging promising practices that span career, community, and education.**

We refer to this synergistic blend of career, community, and education collaboration as the Convergence Model of Promising Practices (see Figure 4). When the 12 local programs collaborate at the core of this model, they tend to express the most satisfaction with improved completion and employment outcomes. While many of the community colleges and adult schools in this study have their own unique processes to guide their collaborative efforts, we distilled their strategies into this cohesive approach.

Reflecting the various practices we observed across our local program site visits, we define what we mean by career, community, and education in broad terms (see Figure 5). We did not seek traditional or technical definitions when we identified the three domains. Rather, we wanted to provide authentic meaning that captures what the staff and students across these 12 local programs shared.

Local CAEP programs are utilizing a set of promising practices that are perceived to better meet students’ needs when implemented collaboratively.

FIGURE 4: The Convergence Model of Promising Practices

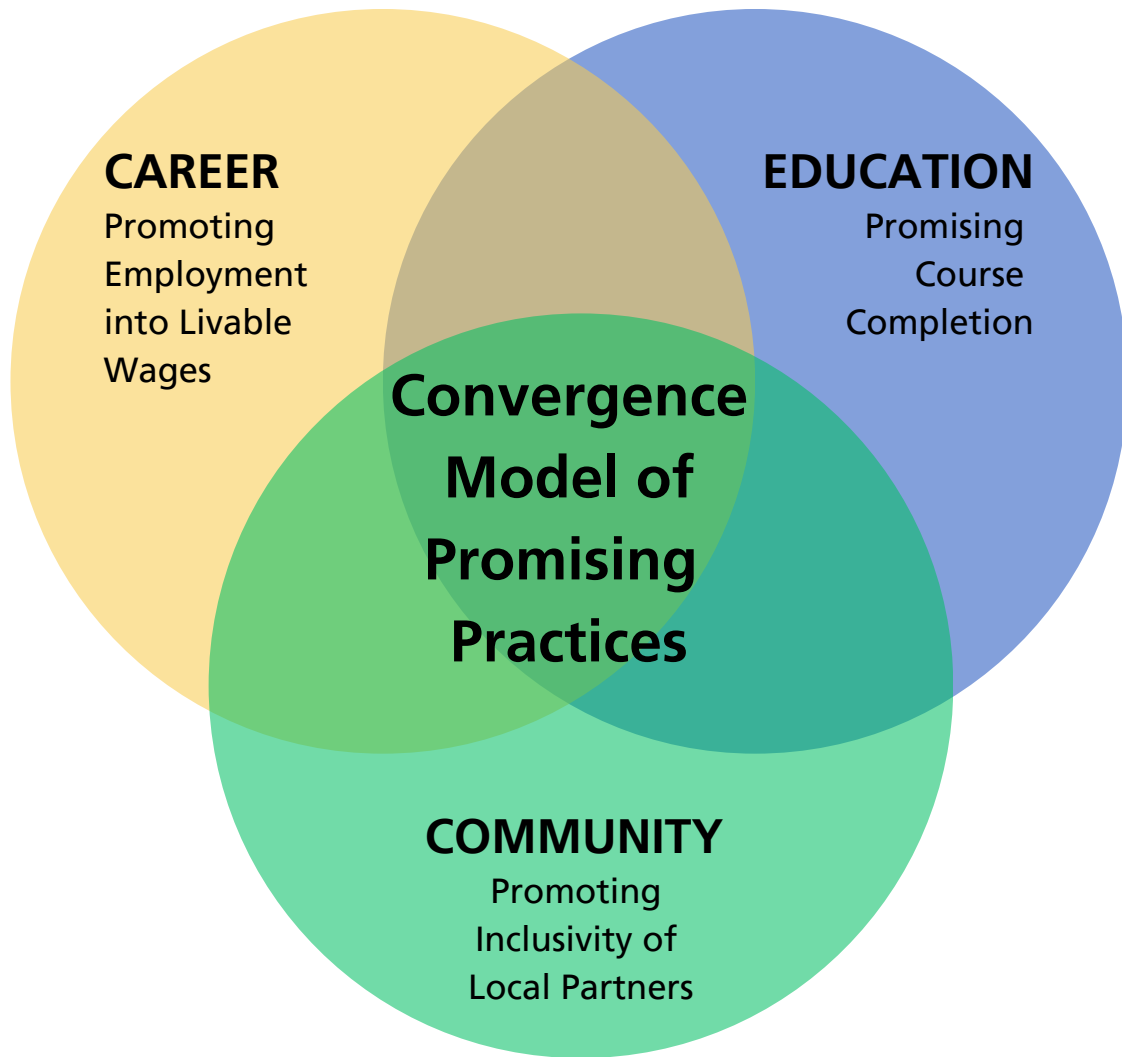


FIGURE 5: Defining Career, Community, and Education within the Convergence Model



Our findings highlight seven converging promising practices within and across these three domains that stakeholders in the selected local programs believe make a difference for adult learner success. The findings show sites are invested in the idea that practices integrating components from each of these domains can be more successful than when implemented alone.

Each of the promising practices described below includes elements that require convergence among on-site career-focused support programming, external community insights, and adult education and postsecondary academic programming to most effectively support adult learners' success.

We recognize that the rate of implementation of the following promising practices differs significantly across the 12 local programs due to factors like region, culture, staffing, leadership, and resources. The data indicated that the stakeholders leading these programs believe that these seven promising practices did contribute to their students' performance along the selected completion and employment outcomes metrics, especially for Students of Color in California.

This analysis is not meant to capture every possible promising practice within the career, community, and education domains. Nevertheless, these converging promising practices demonstrate the potential of a coordinated, intentional set of strategies to improve the outcomes of CAEP students, especially Black, Latinx, and Asian students, succeeding in education and beyond.

Our investigation into these sites and subsequent articulation of the Convergence Model contributes to a growing evidence base. What we observed across the 12 sites is akin to comprehensive student success models more commonly seen in K-12 education, such as Students at the Center,⁸ and in postsecondary education, such as The City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs.⁹ Evidence from randomized controlled trials show that comprehensive student success models, which offer intensive academic and career counseling paired with holistic support, improve student outcomes.¹⁰

Our findings leading to the Convergence Model build on accelerated learning models, such as pre-apprenticeship programs or Integrated Education and Training (IET) models as required by WIOA regulations¹¹ (34 CFR part 463 Subpart D). IET models, by regulation, must include three elements: 1) workforce preparation activities; 2) adult education and literacy activities; and 3) workforce training. Our research spotlights a more expansive set of promising practices focused on adult education learners, of which IETs and/or pre-apprenticeships are one key strategy being implemented across several of the sites.

8 Students at the Center Hub. (n.d.). The students at the center framework. <https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/framework/>

9 CUNY. (n.d.). Accelerated study in associate programs: About. <https://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/about/>

10 The Institute for College Access and Success. (n.d.). Comprehensive approaches to student success programs. <https://ticas.org/our-work/college-completion-2/comprehensive-approaches-to-student-success-programs-nationwide-by-state-and-institution/>

11 US Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. (n.d.). Integrated education and training (IET) guide. https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/IET_checklist508FINAL_0.pdf

The Seven Converging Promising Practices:

1 **A Student Concierge Approach** describes an institution's demonstrated commitment to a personalized, student-centered approach along all aspects of their on-site services, academic programming, and community engagement.

2 **Intentional and Structured Regional Partnerships** deliberately engage community colleges, adult schools, and communities through formalized collaboration, such as accelerated learning models, bridge programs, and staff transition specialists, to advance students along their chosen pathway.

3 **Workforce-Forward Responsive Leaders Who Are 'Strategists'** prioritize effective feedback mechanisms, demonstrate openness to innovative ideas, and emphasize professional development for staff and instructors at all levels to have the skills to improve learner success along completion and transition outcomes.

4 **Data-Informed Decision-Making Beyond Compliance for Continuous Improvement** involves collecting and utilizing a wide range of data to constructively share with all staff, instructors, students, adult school and community college partners, and community members to support the successful transition of students into higher levels of learning and/or employment.

5 **Strategic Resource Allocation** proactively pursues resources to support programs and redistributes funding as necessary.

6 **Practices that Empower Students** create a supportive learning environment across the entire student journey, ensuring all students have voice, agency, information, advocacy skills, and curricula necessary to fully participate in their programs and reach their academic and career goals.

7 **Integrated Student Support Services** are collaboratively designed to meet the unique needs of the community's student population.

We hope this report sparks further inquiry into expanding the concept of comprehensive models (e.g., Guided Pathways, Student at the Center Models) and embedding promising practices throughout the student journey, as we found in many of the 12 selected sites.

Adult education is an ideal system within which to design and test an assortment of comprehensive or converging approaches. The adult education system in California was a logical place to start the investigation, given it is the largest adult education system in the nation and offers a unique consortium model with a combined system of K-12 adult schools and community college and adult education noncredit programs.

Application of the Promising Practices to California's Adult Education System

The California Adult Education Program (CAEP) is the largest adult education system in the country. The system serves 481,200 students (2021-2022 data) and allocated \$652 million (fiscal year 23-24) to 71 regional consortia comprised of 451 member sites¹² (local programs, such as adult schools on high school campuses, community college noncredit, English Language Learning in community libraries, and services within the correctional system, among others where services are delivered).

California's adult education system was restructured in 2014-15 via AB86. AB86 was a legislative planning grant mandate that created a planning committee and determined how best to restructure adult education across the state to more effectively serve students and improve student outcomes.¹³ Then, in 2015-16 AB104, an Adult Education Block Grant formally brought together all adult education programs delivered by the California Department of Education (adult schools) and the state's more than 70 community college districts into regions to promote collaboration.¹⁴ The intent of the reorganization, now called CAEP, was to expand and improve the provision of adult education by creating 71 regional consortia across the state. It empowered the regional consortia to allocate funding and facilitate partnerships and student transitions with the resources and economic opportunities within their regions.

Limitations

Over the course of the study, a few limitations emerged:

- This study is a purposeful sampling, not representative, so findings are not generalizable to all potential contexts.

12 Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult education pipeline overview. <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

13 Adult Education Regional Planning. (2015)

<https://aedn.assembly.ca.gov/sites/aedn.assembly.ca.gov/files/AB%2086%20Consortia%20Final%20Report.pdf>

14 https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB104

- Similarly, based on the scope of work and project capacity, we conducted interviews with approximately 200 people (100 faculty, instructors, administrators, and staff, and nearly 100 students) across 12 member sites. However, more interviews are needed to reach saturation in the findings. Our findings are based on robust thematic coding, but saturation is difficult to reach with a limited number of interviews.
- Although the findings reflect the beliefs, perceptions, and experiences of the leaders and students we interviewed, we cannot assign causality of the promising practices to student outcomes. Our findings highlight potential factors believed to be contributing to the performance outcomes at these sites.
- While the sites demonstrated a level of implementation of the promising practices, not all of the sites had consistently applied the promising practices to their local context, with all of them acknowledging they had “more work to do.”

How to Read This Report

The goal of our study was to identify promising practices that program directors, faculty, instructors, staff, and students believe contribute to sites having comparable or higher performance than the state average related to course completion (CTE and postsecondary credentials, and educational functional levels) and livable wages. The report outlines the innovative Convergence Model and communicates the power of putting promising practices together across the student journey.

While many of the interviewees did not necessarily articulate the comprehensive integration of services or use the language of converging promising practices, it became clear during our qualitative analysis that they were taking a collaborative approach to improve student success.

In the [Findings](#) section of the report, we present seven converging promising practices generated across all 12 sites. The [Future Research](#) section provides suggestions for building on and replicating this research and advancing student outcomes across California and nationally.

FINDINGS

Overview

The following seven promising practices, with affiliated strategies and benefits, were primarily implemented across all 12 of the local programs examined in this study, albeit in different forms and with varying levels of success. As one Adult School Principal noted, “We are working on making our decisions better with data, and we are making strides, but are not nearly where we want to be.” Another College Dean said, “We have come a long way building partnerships across the region with a few key institutions, but have more work to do to keep expanding those relationships and getting to scale with more than the three or four we have now.”

Recognizing there are significant contextual differences across the more than 450 local programs delivering adult education services throughout the state, programs can translate these practices into their local context. We encourage readers to consider the promising practices within the unique context of their local adult school, community college, or other entities delivering services to adult learners.

- 1 A Student Concierge Approach**
- 2 Intentional and Structured Regional Partnerships**
- 3 Workforce-Forward Responsive Leaders Who Are ‘Strategists’**
- 4 Data-Informed Decision-Making Beyond Compliance for Continuous Improvement**
- 5 Strategic Resource Allocation**
- 6 Practices that Empower Students**
- 7 Integrated Student Support Services**







Promising Practice 1: A Student Concierge Approach

During our interviews, institutions demonstrated a collective commitment to a personalized, student-centered approach along all aspects of their on-site services, academic programming, and community engagement. One participant in our research used the term “student concierge” to describe this hyper-personalized approach. Appreciating this concept, we adopted the term, which is most associated with the hotel/lodging industry. A Student Concierge Approach means that students receive the level of help needed, from staff walking with them to various offices on campus to responding to texts or emails after instructional hours. Students talked about this Concierge Approach as a feeling of being valued, helped at the right time, and given guidance on how to do specific activities, like log into their campus email account or co-enroll in classes as part of an IET program. This level of personalized support extended to how students were treated in the front office, to their classroom experiences, to their access to mental health and/or other community services, and to guided tours and introductions to instructors at the community college when ready to transfer. A Student Concierge approach goes beyond ways in which we think about student-centeredness.

Key Strategies

The three primary strategies that emerged from our interviews for this promising practice include:

-  **Integrating pathways**
-  **Facilitating streamlined transitions**
-  **Providing personalized support**

 **Integrating pathways** include accelerated learning models and represent a continued commitment to transforming educational and workforce education programming. According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 44 of the 71 regional CAEP consortia are implementing some form of accelerated learning models to develop healthcare pathways for English language learners. The models include Integrated Education and Training (IET) models, pre-apprenticeships, and bridge programs, among others. These pathways are meticulously designed to align with students' career goals, offering a direct route to the job market. As noted by some CAEP administrators, students find motivation in integrated pathways, seeing a clear connection between their academic pursuits and future careers. This relevance is bolstered by the pathways' design, which is informed by adult schools, community colleges, and local employers to align closely with industry needs, ensuring students acquire skills pertinent to the current regional job market.

Many students shared how they were taking ESL classes at an adult school and then transported to the community college to take classes like medical coding, accounting, and advanced manufacturing. They talked about how easy it was to make this IET schedule work.

What It Looks Like

Committing to accelerated learning models, such as IET, pre-apprenticeships, and bridge programs.

Emphasizing instructor support by providing practitioners with professional development opportunities and incentives to participate in a range of accelerated learning models and pathways.

Encouraging faculty to act as facilitators of student success by implementing independent project-based instruction, giving asset-based feedback, and being available to answer student questions outside of classroom time.

Instilling the confidence that students need to participate successfully in accelerated learning models to hasten their workplace readiness.

Diversifying resources by seeking external funding sources, grants, or partnerships to supplement resources for pathway development and, for some sites, to provide cost-free instruction.

Facilitating instructor visits with vocational partners to get hands-on experience to be able to more accurately advise students and ensure curriculum alignment with workplace experience.

Enhancing advising models by investing in counselor training and developing a proactive advising system for clear pathway guidance.

Establishing cross-functional teams to review and align curriculum with incentives for instructor involvement. The effectiveness of these teams facilitate communication and coordination across student instruction.

Aligning curricula between schools and colleges to ensure a seamless transition for students by reducing obstacles for transfers. Participants suggested developing articulation agreements, mapping program pathways, and engaging in ongoing discussions to ensure curricula align with industry demand.

Offering accelerated training supports, like IET and pre-apprenticeship support, in all CTE classes to scale and boost student transitions.



Facilitating streamlined transitions,

particularly for students moving from noncredit to credit courses, is critical to a Student Concierge Approach. The sites believed that students often struggle during this transition leading to stop-out points where they do not pursue additional education, potentially limiting their career mobility. Interviewees attributed this to

students' difficulty adapting to the college environment, but it also could be related to limited access to support and information from the institutions about the transition. Collaborative efforts between different departments and programs within and among educational institutions we found were instrumental in facilitating transition. For example, most of the sites had developed flow charts showing the student journey with clear roles and who was responsible at key transition points to ensure a strong handoff for pathway progression.



Our integrated pathways have transformed how students navigate their education journey.

-Administrator at Sweetwater Union High School District



What It Looks Like

Assisting students in identifying a career plan first and then building a corresponding education plan. This ensures a smoother transition by drawing on input from vocational partners, academic counselors, and instructors.

Guiding students from adult education to higher education and into the workforce through a streamlined approach to career progression. At some sites, these individuals are called “navigators,” “transition managers,” or “counselors.”

Committing to align curricula between adult schools and community colleges to enable students to transition seamlessly.

Scheduling classes around students’ work schedules, offering flex sites, and improving online services and access to coursework. Many sites referenced improving online accessibility.

Designing curriculum collaboratively to ensure alignment with both adult school and community college standards. This commitment to collaboration is evident in joint programs with articulation agreements that provide clarity for students on credit transfers and program pathways.

➤ ***Providing personalized support*** involves a robust commitment to a personalized and respectful approach with students. Students across all 12 adult schools and community colleges primarily praised the way they were treated and the culture of care and sense of belonging they felt. Students shared that they could learn and build confidence and that they felt their cultural heritage was honored. We noted the key role instructors play in the classroom toward building this culture of care. While most instructors and faculty shared that they believed in their students and their academic abilities and pushed them to achieve their goals, we did find a few rare instances of ESL instructors as “gatekeepers.” A few instructors stated in interviews that they tended to be protective of their ESL students and would only consider recommending placement into the next level if students were thoroughly ready.

What It Looks Like

Training front-line staff in customer service techniques, since the first contact students have with the school or college is the most important one.

Providing community college tours, including instructor introductions, for adult school students who are about to transition to pursue CTE or other training programs to ease trepidation.

Supporting students outside of the classroom or campus by answering off-hours text messages and by reaching out on a personal level directly and routinely to students to ensure progress and learning.

Benefits of a Student Concierge Approach

Ideally, a Student Concierge Approach offers personalized support alongside a streamlined, seamless educational journey, enhancing clarity for students who receive a well-defined academic and career roadmap. CAEP leaders in this study believe that a Concierge experience contributes significantly to student retention and completion, leading to improved employment outcomes for graduates. The alignment of educational pathways between community colleges, adult schools, and local community labor market needs removes obstacles, streamlining students' progress and ensuring a cohesive educational experience.

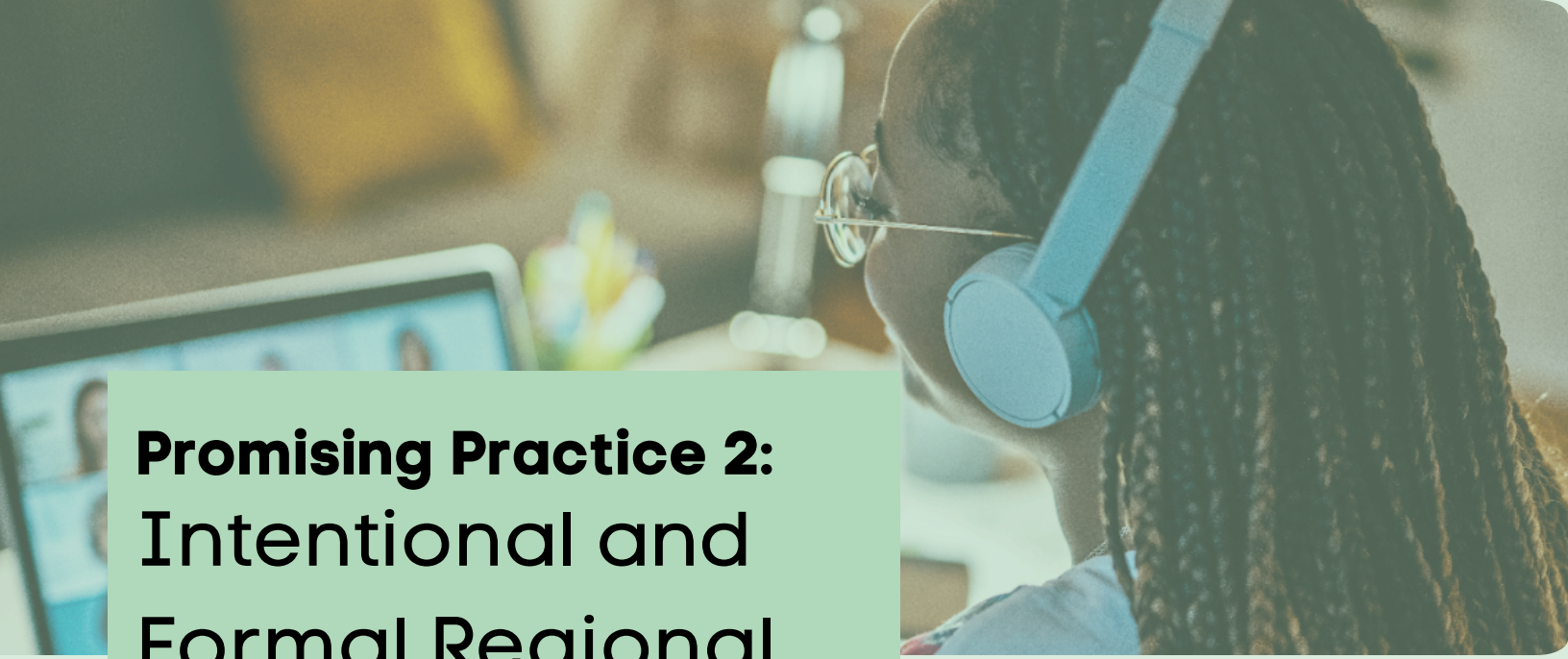
A Student Concierge Approach can serve to increase accessibility to education, particularly for historically underserved populations, like Students of Color, or other underserved students. Collaborative efforts result in well-defined educational pathways that guide students into the support they need in real-time and support the transition from noncredit to credit programs, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Most students highly praised their instructors or staff in student support services as being compassionate, supportive, positive, and creating a culture where they felt they belonged and thrived. The community colleges or adult schools provided extensive barrier mitigation, such as removing most fees, even for textbooks and supplies, and problem-solving with students so they could attain completion.

Meet Mohammed: Accelerated Learning Models Connect Students to Good Jobs

Mohammed had dreams of becoming an electrician. As a single father with a criminal record, he faced significant personal challenges and feared that his dreams might not come true. Despite these obstacles, Mohammed never gave up. He learned about the San Diego College of Continuing Education and sought career guidance there. After several conversations, he enrolled in the Apprenticeship Readiness Program (ARP).

Mohammed successfully completed the 12-week ARP, earning several certifications including the Multi Core Craft (MC3) Certification. Upon graduating, he transitioned to an electrician training program to further prepare for becoming an electrician apprentice. During the program graduation, Mohammad brought his son and thanked the program faculty and college staff for believing in him during one of his low points and guiding him to achieve his dream of becoming an electrician.



Promising Practice 2: Intentional and Formal Regional Partnerships

We observed intentional and formal partnerships structured throughout the region between the adult schools, community colleges, and their community partners, including community-based organizations, local industry leaders, libraries, workforce agencies, and community members. In the two rural locations, they had important partnerships with four-year colleges as well. Interviewees identified forming partnerships as a vital practice for tailoring educational offerings, promoting career readiness, enhancing educational transitions, optimizing resources, and boosting student success. During the site visits, each program tended to have several strategies where building those partnerships reinforced objectives, such as strengthening career transitions by sharing staff between the adult school and community college. Other sites, while they had structured regional partnerships, didn't always have a clear vision about how to expand or grow where it may be most needed. For example, some of the sites wanted community support for wrap-around services but didn't seem to have traction on which organizations to recruit or approach.

We noted several ways the community colleges and adult schools built regional partnerships including: (a) developing pre-apprenticeships connected to apprenticeships; (b) using Integrated Education & Training models, including a few with team teaching; and (c) hiring transition specialists to create easier transitions to advance students along their chosen pathway.

At the core of this promising practice lies a strong commitment from many sites to address the unique needs of the community and its students, to embrace diversity, and to enhance students' well-being and success. The development of these partnerships reflects a comprehensive and empathetic approach to education, aligning the goals of various stakeholders for the collective benefit of students and the broader community.

Key Strategies

The two primary strategies of Intentional and Structured Regional Partnerships that emerged from interviews include:

- **Intentionally engaging the community**
- **Developing formal partnerships and collaborations**

➤ ***Intentionally engaging the community***, as defined through our analysis, is the proactive involvement of local communities in the process of shaping educational programs and career readiness. This engagement is an intentionally designed strategy for many of the adult schools and community colleges studied. Leaders from CAEP sites have worked to build engagement that they believe directly correlates with reduced local unemployment rates, as educational efforts are tailored to meet the career needs of the community. Partnerships between career-oriented departments at CAEP sites and community members were perceived by interviewees to contribute to the development of a skilled workforce. Local programs pursue alignment between labor market needs and career programming to better prepare students for successful entry into the workforce. A few gaps we observed had to do with committing to recent labor market information. Some of the sites had deep understanding of their students and how to serve the community but didn't always have comparable understanding of in-demand jobs based on recent data.

What It Looks Like

Hosting community events, for example one holds an annual Women's Conference for the community. Sessions included financial wealth building, domestic relationship awareness, and options for returning to the workforce.

Participating in CAEP Regional Consortium meetings to build trust, collaboration, and transitions for student pathways in and between ESL to CTE and to degree and transfer programs.

Understanding and addressing specific community needs through employer interviews and aligning labor market data with programs offered, including retiring programs no longer in demand.

Implementing strategic, multilingual campaigns through social media and community events to highlight offerings and provide more access for students and two-generation recruitment.

Fostering community dialogue through employer or institution-hosted events, such as workshops, town halls, and informational meetings at neutral or barrier-free locations. Addressing geographical barriers through satellite campus networks, allowing students the flexibility to access courses and resources across multiple campuses.

Cultivating sustained partnerships between career education-focused programs and employers with an emphasis on developing coursework connected to high-wage, high-demand jobs.



Developing formal partnerships and collaborations emerged as a strategic cornerstone for enhancing community engagement and resource access. These alliances span local organizations, businesses, and other educational institutions to deepen community ties and educational outreach.

Virtually all 12 sites explicitly mentioned the structured partnerships derived from AB86 that now elevate the quality of education. They noted a higher degree of collaboration that enriches the regional learning systems' landscape by pooling varied expertise and resources. Many administrators noted the proliferation of relationships among and across institutional types. A particularly salient goal among these collaborations is to create a shared vision for student pathways. An educational experience that integrates adult schools with community colleges can reduce some administrative barriers for students and streamlines their educational journey.



Our partnership is driven by mutual goals, primarily focused on increasing student enrollment and completion rates. Having shared objectives keeps us aligned and motivated to achieve positive outcomes for our students.
- Administrator at Paramount Adult School



What It Looks Like

Networking and relationship-building with local stakeholders and leaders in a collaborative culture.

Formalizing these connections through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and shared goals to ensure that a culture of commitment transcends any shifts in leadership. Such clear agreements delineate roles and responsibilities, paving the way for smooth interactions and mutual understanding.

Sharing resources, including facilities and instructor expertise, and materials, such as textbooks and lab equipment.

Creative leveraging, like optimizing existing resources, pursuing grants, and seeking shared funding opportunities, to bolster cooperative endeavors.

Strategic planning to secure the sustainability of partnerships by ensuring that long-term goals and priorities are outlined and addressed.

Benefits of Intentional and Formal Partnerships

By breaking down barriers to education, these institutions are opening doors wider, ensuring education is accessible to all community members and not just a privileged few. This is critical in the case of one of the participating community colleges that saw its community engagement efforts translate to a rebound in enrollment numbers, a promising recovery from the pandemic's impact on student enrollment. In synthesizing these insights, we find that community engagement thrives at the core of the Convergence Model. It is the nexus of career, community, and educational interests, driving towards the collective aim of enhanced student success.



...our program will be offering ESL to partners together. So the willingness and the ease with which multiple agencies in this region are willing to work together for a common outcome is one of the reasons why performance outcomes and student data are so successful.

- Administrator at Adult Education Plumas Unified School District





Promising Practice 3: Workforce-Forward Responsive Leaders Who Are Strategists

Across the 12 sites, we noted the leaders (e.g., principals, assistant principals, deans, and vice presidents of student support services) showed some similar traits. Actions such as prioritizing workforce development and career mobility for students, utilizing effective feedback mechanisms like student surveys, demonstrating a strong openness to innovative ideas, and emphasizing systemic professional development for staff and instructors were observed. These strategies enabled the executive team and campus leaders to analyze data and improve learner success along completion and transition outcomes. Some of the sites had structured a full-time data analyst position through the general fund to provide timely data to administrators, instructors, and staff for weekly planning sessions. The data included student transitions to other regional community colleges or adult schools as well as tracking into the job market to collect wage data.

We found that the continuous use of data seemed to enable a distributed leadership model. The administration, staff, instructors, and faculty became proactive participants and leaders. We heard across interviews with instructors and faculty that they are interested in expanding beyond the confines of a classroom to actively engage in community events and initiatives.

This engagement extends to collaboration with community partners, ensuring smooth transitions and effective support services for students. Such involvement brings a crucial benefit – instructors and staff feel more valued and engaged when their voices are heard and their ideas are integrated into the broader mission. An instructor highlighted this, noting the genuine interest of leadership in instructor perspectives, which contributes to a sense of worth and engagement.

Key Strategies

Two strategies that emerged from our interviews for this promising practice are:

- **Structuring a leadership team with cross-functional staff to promote student career mobility, innovation, and continuous improvement**
- **Emphasizing professional development**

➤ **Structuring a leadership team with cross-functional staff to promote innovation and continuous improvement** means seeking input from all levels through collaboration, feedback loops, and instructor, staff, and community empowerment. Trust and effective feedback mechanisms are integral to maintaining this collaborative ecosystem. The 12 sites cited the goal of fostering a culture of open communication, enabling instructors and staff to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas with leadership, knowing that leadership will try to listen and act on feedback.

What It Looks Like

Implementing and improving accelerated learning models based on instructor feedback that lead to student career mobility and living wage jobs, such as pre-apprenticeships and IET models.

Allocating specific time for feedback within existing schedules and ensuring that leaders act as listeners, receptive to the perspectives of instructors, staff, and the community. This creates an environment in which feedback is not just encouraged but seen as a necessity.

Prioritizing the accessibility of leadership to instructors, staff, and students to foster open dialogue. For example, the strategic location of leadership offices and the practice of administrative leaders greeting students, staff, and instructors every morning in the campus parking lot signals leaders' approachability.

Restructuring Adult Education as an Academic Division with parity with other divisions.



Our leaders empower us to contribute to decisions that impact student success, fostering a sense of ownership.

-Instructor at Visalia Unified School District



➤ ***Emphasizing professional development*** plays a significant role as a strategy, with cultural sensitivity training as a key component. Fostering a highly effective team that is able to focus on ways to continuously improve requires intentional planning time. Leaders structured several times per week for instructors and staff to meet and collaborate within and across specific roles and functions, such as all ESL Level 1 & 2 instructors or all IET instructors. This commitment included key data presentations from the data team and Institutional Research staff.

What It Looks Like

Requesting data teams to provide information about the transition of students into the labor market and reviewing living wage data and other factors to promote career mobility buy-in across staff and instructors.

Creating a campus-wide workforce-forward culture to ensure student career goals are realized.

Ensuring transparent and open channels of communication by keeping all stakeholders informed about the goals, progress, and outcomes of efforts.

Offering cultural competence training to bridge language and cultural barriers and promote respectful interactions, ensuring inclusivity and sensitivity towards the diverse students staff serve.

“

Our students' voices guide our decisions. We want to meet their expectations and beyond.

-Faculty at Compton College

”


Benefits of Workforce-Forward Responsive Leaders Who Are ‘Strategists’

Staff, faculty, and instructors are empowered by leadership practices that have a clear vision for successful student transition into the labor market and that foster a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the institution's goals and strategies. For example, students were invited to provide feedback to ESL instructors at the end of a term. Students collectively shared that if they had a consistent class schedule for both terms, they could more easily arrange childcare. Even further, they requested online and flexible summer course delivery options due to their children being out of school for the summer. These sorts of empowerment strategies facilitated student retention and completion of their programs leading to careers.

Overall, instructors, staff, and students noted a high degree of satisfaction with leaders of the community colleges and adult schools who could communicate this career-focused vision. Interviewees believe this kind of collaborative leadership leads to higher levels of morale, creativity, and innovation and encourages accountability at all levels. Finally, implementing decisions in response to feedback allows institutions to more effectively address student needs.

Meet Edgar: Career Connected Learning and Support

Edgar V. was enrolled in several Computer Information System (CIS) classes and finishing up advanced English language classes in Level 5/6 in an Integrated Education and Training program at ABC Adult School. One of his IT instructors hired him for a paid internship in the instructor's small business, refurbishing and reselling returned computers. This hands-on experience provided Edgar with a sense of confidence, a source of income, and a point of entry into the IT field. ABC's integration of experiential learning, entrepreneurship, instruction, and community networking clearly benefited Edgar.



Promising Practice 4: Data-Informed Decision- Making Beyond Compliance for Continuous Improvement

A recurring promising practice was data-informed decision-making, particularly the practices of collecting and utilizing community feedback to inform decisions related to the development and continuous improvement of programs, partnerships, and supports. Almost every site discussed an annual community needs assessment, but several seemed to go beyond the baseline to try to project current and future in-demand jobs and accessibility of programs in neighborhoods where community members may not come to the main campus.

Following the needs assessment, the sites collected and utilized a wide range of student performance and transition data to constructively share with staff, instructors, students, adult school and community college partners, and community members. This was operationalized in town halls, online presentations, newsletters, and a Women's Conference at one site. The goal of this practice is to better build the successful transition of students into higher levels of learning and/or employment and to problem solve together. Stakeholders looked at data across the student journey, sometimes including starting points across regional partners, such as adult schools, community colleges/CTE programs, and degree and transfer pathways for better ways to help student transition.

Key Strategies

The two primary strategies observed in the data related to this promising practice are:

- **Building the capacity of the institution to analyze and use data for continuous improvement**
- **Improving data use**

➤ ***Building the capacity of the institution to analyze and use data for continuous improvement*** includes recruiting and hiring qualified staff who have the ability to provide school and campus stakeholders with analyses that can illuminate factors affecting student transitions. This approach encompasses data-driven community assessments, as well as student and faculty voice, to tailor academic offerings to specific local needs. As local CAEP administrators explained, they conduct surveys and focus groups to grasp community insights, allowing for the adaptation of curricula to reflect the local market trends.

What It Looks Like

Setting metrics and scaling up successful programs to benefit a broader segment of the community.

Developing user-friendly student data dashboards to monitor progress.

Providing professional development opportunities and workshops to equip instructors and staff with necessary collaboration, leadership, and data skills.

Routinely offering Faculty and Instructor Data Institutes and developing online classes on how to analyze course data and make changes to improve the following semester.

Hosting 'Data Night' with various departments to review student and performance data toward improvement.

Seeking community feedback to continuously improve services and offerings.



We organize feedback through structured means like focus groups to make the process manageable and effective.

-Faculty at College of Sequoias



➤ **Improving data use** was a priority for sites. The community colleges and adult schools demonstrated various ways they embed data (e.g., student performance data, labor market information) at the course level, program level, and across departments for collaboration. Student data reports were readily accessible for instructors, and training was provided for how to run their own instructors reports to better understand and monitor student success in their classes. Some of the sites routinely looked at courses with less than a 50% student pass rate to flag for department chairs to find ways to maintain rigor while supporting more students to pass the class. The sites used data at varying degrees, but most understood that data had to be used not just for reporting or compliance but also for program reviews, instructors course completion rates, student transition metrics, and the institutions' strategic plans, consistent with institutions' culture of continuous improvement.

What was most challenging for the sites was the ability to hire qualified data staff with time to commit to running detailed data reports with disaggregated data. For example, just two of the sites could tell us more about the composition of students participating in work-based learning (e.g., how many were Students of Color and if the work-based learning experience led to more success than students who didn't participate in the work based learning).

What It Looks Like

Committing to data infrastructure to support student success. This could entail restructuring the organization so that the Department of Professional Development and the Research Center report directly to the Dean of Research and Institutional Effectiveness.

Including equity metrics and disaggregating data to understand how Student of Color are accessing or benefitting from programs. For example, many sites disaggregate data to see if internships are making a difference between students who participate and those who don't.

Integrating labor market data into the program review process to strengthen responsiveness to employer and industry needs and provide students with credentials of value.

Developing a specialized data warehouse for curriculum and sharing it more broadly for continuous improvement with instructors and faculty.

Using robust feedback mechanisms, like surveys and town hall meetings, to gather valuable input for informed decision-making.

Sharing data between adult schools, community colleges, and community partners to foster transparency and identify areas for service enhancement. This allows for accurate tracking of student progress and supports data-driven decision-making for continuous improvement.

Benefits of Data-Informed Decision-Making Beyond Compliance for Continuous Improvement

Three key benefits of data-informed decision-making are:

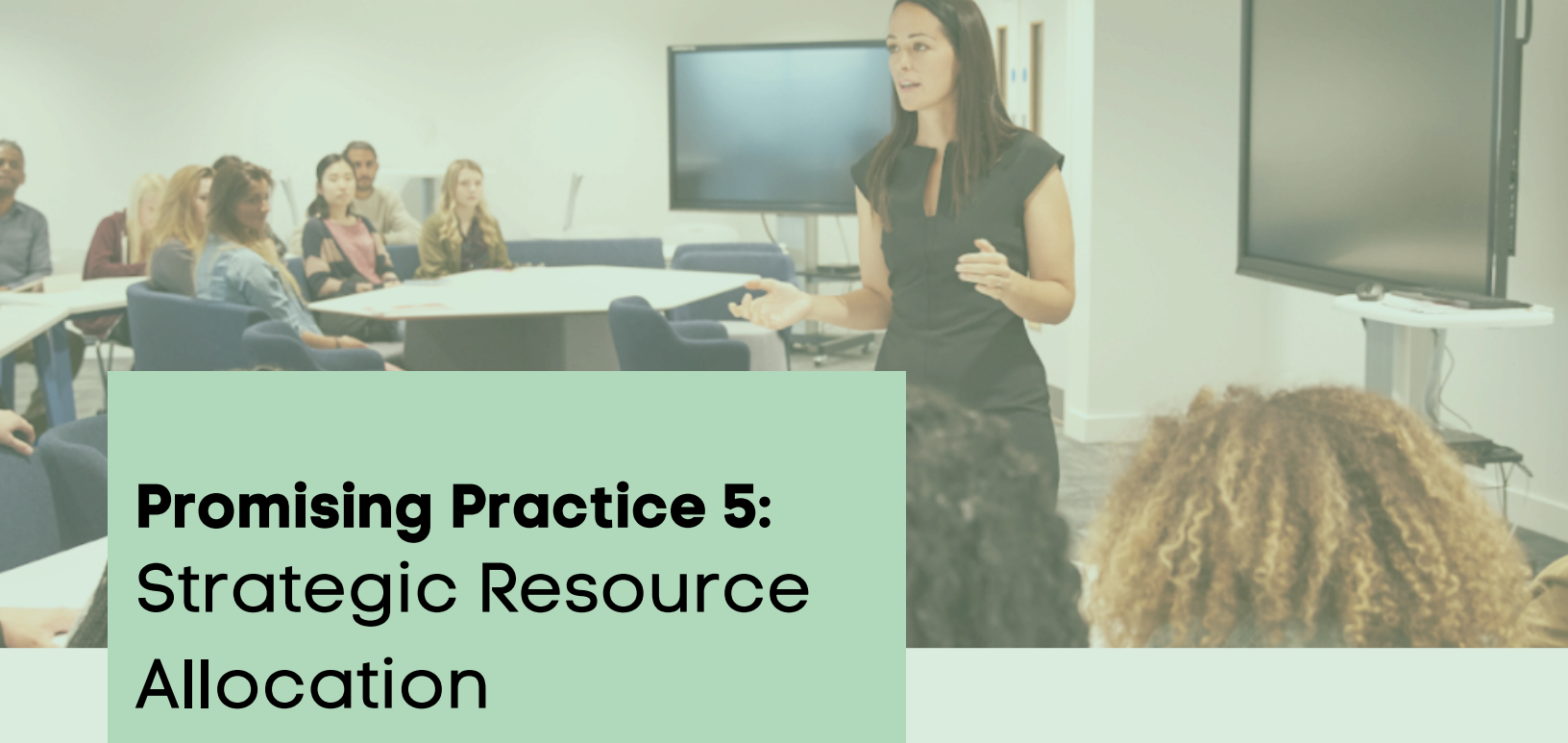
- Development of relevant curricula and the opportunity for program improvement. By regularly adapting credit and noncredit educational programs to address community needs, these institutions ensure that their offerings remain relevant and impactful.
- Regular assessments help identify the pressing needs of the community and enable program adjustments.
- Engaging instructors and staff in regular trainings and analyses of student pathway data provides the basis to empower students and better serve employers and the community.



It took us many years to be able to share data on how many Adult School students from the unified high schools were transitioning to our college, but we did it. That was the first step and we are building on that.

-Researcher at San Diego College of Continuing Education






Promising Practice 5: Strategic Resource Allocation

Strategic resource allocation prioritizes the proactive pursuit of additional resources to support programs, as well as the redistribution of funding if necessary.

Key Strategy

This practice is characterized by one key observed strategy:

Resource maximization

 ***Resource maximization*** means focusing resources on programs and initiatives that improve outcomes for adult learners. The community colleges and adult schools in this study described either actively or previously securing additional resources through grants and fundraising efforts, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing the scope and impact of their educational and career services. Some administrators also described efforts to redirect or braid funds to support new initiatives or partnerships. Many sites shared how they are partnering with their local workforce agencies for funding and training support, as well as Ability to Benefit to support learners in IET models. While many sites spoke about knowing about Ability to Benefit, they were less clear about the actual number of students accessing that particular braided funding strategy.

What It Looks Like

Sharing tangible resources, from libraries and labs to instructor expertise, across multiple education institution partners to provide enriched learning environments and opportunities for students.

Finding ways to reduce the financial burden for students, with some adult schools able to fund most of the fees, and certain colleges accessing WIOA and Ability to Benefit dollars for students.

Projecting resource-savvy strategies to cover all student expenses for courses, books and supplies, fees for licensure, and transportation.

One adult school funded three full-time transition specialists who spent part of their time at the community college to ensure pathway progression and retention.


Fostering collaboration between adult schools, community colleges, and various community entities to open up new avenues for funding and grants. These collaborations not only provide financial support for students but also create opportunities for innovation in programming and service delivery.

Benefits of Strategic Resource Allocation

A key aspect in strategically allocating resources is the utilization of partnerships across career, community, and education to amplify resources while minimizing unnecessary duplication. This leads to more cost-effective programs and services, benefiting both the institutions and the communities they serve. The strategic alignment of resources, partnerships, and funding efforts underscores the commitment of CAEP leaders to maximize the potential of their programs and initiatives, ensuring they are both sustainable and responsive to the evolving needs of their communities.

Pooling our resources allows us to offer a comprehensive educational experience for students.

-Administrator at Feather River College



Promising Practice 6: Practices that Empower Students

Practices that empower students create a supportive learning environment across the entire student journey, ensuring all students have voice, agency, information, advocacy skills, and curricula necessary to fully participate in their programs and reach their academic and career goals. Interviewees largely expressed an intentional commitment to listening to student voices.

Key Strategies

The interview data indicated that sites relied on three key strategies related to Practices that Empower Students:

- ▶ **Proactive and personalized student guidance**
- ▶ **Implementing culturally relevant education and curriculum**
- ▶ **Committing to students' career mobility**

“

So the good part of this school, they want you to succeed and they want you to go forward and they want you to get it done and see your future.

-Student at Torrance Adult School

”

➤ ***Proactive and personalized student guidance*** is central to empowering student voice. Administrators, staff, and instructors highlighted the significance of actively guiding students through their educational journey by offering necessary support to facilitate progression. Interviewees expressed that comprehensive career guidance on the front end can help learners understand their options before selecting academic programs. Once learners have settled on a program, guidance and counseling services continue to be crucial in helping students to follow their educational and career pathways. This requires both systems that actively guide students and personalization to ensure their success.

What It Looks Like

Training all front office staff in customer service to provide relational versus transactional student engagement.

Offering career exploration and pathway information at enrollment to enable informed decision-making prior to program selection.

Asking students to sign contracts affirming their commitment to their academic program and acknowledging their understanding of the pathway.

Creating intentional and frequent student feedback loops and surveys.

Encouraging self-advocacy and emphasizing student choice in career training programs.

Providing CAEP students at the community college with college IDs.

Leveraging external partnerships to inform students about various career options through guest speakers, career fairs, and workshops.

Integrating Adult Education certifications and graduation with the overall ceremonies held by the high school or college for inclusiveness.

Offering career exploration programs, such as job shadowing, to expose students to diverse careers, industries, and job prospects and to help them make informed career decisions.

Ensuring free parking, one of the most important factors students communicated during focus groups.



Implementing culturally relevant education and curriculum

plays a vital role in the current landscape of adult education at the 12 sites. These community colleges and adult schools are increasingly focusing on offering education that is not only academically robust but also culturally resonant, acknowledging and embracing the diverse cultural backgrounds of students. Instructors and faculty cited a variety of themes for their culturally relevant curriculum approaches.



Guest speakers from various industries share insights with students about potential careers. Career fairs and workshops are organized to expose students to diverse career options.
- Administrator at ABC Adult School



What It Looks Like

Establishing robust feedback mechanisms for community input to foster educational programs that are adaptable and responsive to changing community needs.

Selecting a curriculum that is aligned with community goals for local industry development and that equips students with vocational skills.

Collaborative planning between adult schools and community colleges to ensure curriculum alignment and coherence, providing students with a seamless and integrated educational experience.

Employing student recognition strategies to contribute to students' emotional and academic well-being. Examples include announcing "Student of the Week," posting examples of student work in student lounges or centers, and sharing Meaningful Skill Gains data directly with students so that they can track their own progress and make decisions about their pathways.

Actively engaging learners in decision-making about their learning and encouraging participatory practices in which students (especially in English language learning classes) collaboratively shape the direction of their learning.

Committing to affirming models of teaching and valuing learners' race, cultures, and communities.

Initiating classroom discussion about their social selves, community hopes, and challenges through classroom assignments like writing prompts.

➤ ***Committing to students' career mobility*** is a major category of strategies for empowering students. Across the sites, we repeatedly heard an array of strategies in which the community colleges and adult schools were not just focused on job placement but demonstrated a commitment to longer term student career mobility. For example, some sites continued career services and career counseling support even after graduation. Not surprisingly, several of the local programs also noted how difficult it is to track students into employment to even evaluate the potential for career mobility.

Alumni services and mentoring were frequently noted as ways to stay engaged with students. These strategies showed an explicit understanding that students who are entering the job market now are potential students in the future. The studied adult schools and community colleges see career mobility as a way to build and maintain positive relationships with students, and while several said they had a long way to go, they have a clear vision so that students know they have a school or college to return to, if and when they need new skills and credentials.

What It Looks Like

Career readiness is systemic, just like student orientation or assessment. Many sites noted that you must start with career planning first, with an educational plan developed second. They believe this process provides a much stronger likelihood that students will stay on course and see the relevance of their courses for their career pathway.

Students who are undecided about career goals engage in intentional career exploration. Sites noted career planning activities could include employer guest speakers, job shadowing, and embedded internships, among others.

Most sites had explicit career pathways maps (including degree and transfer programs to CSU and UC) displayed in classrooms as an empowerment tool used in career planning.

Many sites offered advising and student orientations with staff who are knowledgeable about pathways in their field.

Faculty and instructors exhibited high expectations for students to keep going with their learning and supported them to earn a marketable credential leading to living wages.

Benefits of Implementing Practices that Empower Students

Career exploration and guidance empowers students to understand, define, and pursue their own path, with retention as a potential beneficial byproduct. Students interviewed mentioned the value of early career planning followed by education plans and goal setting. Clear transition pathways and an emphasis on the progression from adult education to higher education and careers can make it easier for students to progress.

Instructors and program directors are dedicated to designing programs and courses that consider cultural nuances, ensuring that the learning environment is welcoming and inclusive for students from the local community who come from a wide range of backgrounds. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also reinforces a sense of belonging among students.

Our data and interviews show evidence that when learners feel they belong and see their education pathways intertwined with their community and career aspirations, their participation is enhanced.



It's not about memorizing, and they [instructors] want you to understand because on a test we can memorize... like what's the point? You lose it when you get out of here. It's about really understanding the material that is being put in front of us.

- Student at El Camino College





Promising Practice 7: Integrated Student Support Services

This practice entails the provision of student support services that are meticulously designed to meet the unique needs of the community’s student population. These services are integrated across the adult schools, community colleges, and community partners, forming a comprehensive support network for students.

Integrated student support services are not limited to academic assistance; they extend to basic and personal needs, such as food, transportation, and affordable housing, ensuring that students receive holistic support. This approach is exemplified by several interviewed sites where collaboration between different educational and community organizations enables extensive support services, including career counseling, mental health referrals, and intensive advising, even following students after transfer to another institution or into the workforce. Some sites structured what they called “student success teams.” These teams charted every available support for students who qualified and, over time, established formal or informal networks with regional partner institutions, community based organizations, employers, and basic need organizations to bring to life the Convergence Model that plays such a pivotal role in providing support and student completion.

Key Strategies

The implementation of these integrated student support services involves the following key strategy:

- ▶ **Addressing student needs holistically and across partners**

➤ ***Addressing student needs holistically and across partners*** happens when partners work collaboratively to ensure that students receive comprehensive, just-in-time, comprehensive support services. These services are not just responsive; they are designed to be available at the right place and time in each student's journey and lead to a more unified student experience. CAEP administrators emphasized the importance of customized support services that resonate with the lived experiences of students from the local community, ensuring that the support provided is culturally relevant and sensitive to their needs. These services are instrumental in enhancing student recruitment, retention, and success. As one CAEP administrator aptly put it, "Integrated support services are a cornerstone of our partnership [with educational providers and the community], providing students with holistic assistance."

What It Looks Like

Employing a holistic approach that actively addresses broader community issues. This involves implementing wraparound services that cater to the unique challenges faced by diverse students, such as childcare, subsidized mental health counseling, and basic needs support.

Offering students tangible aids, like farmers' market coupons, bus passes, and free parking, which reflect the deep relationship that is valued by municipal services that collaborate on the provision of these items.

Instituting mentorship programs in which community members participate as mentors and volunteers, thereby fostering a supportive and nurturing environment for student success.

Providing financial aid in the form of scholarships, aid packages, and free or subsidized noncredit courses to ensure equitable access to education.

Benefits of Integrated Student Support Services

Integrated student support services signifies a paradigm shift in how educational institutions, in collaboration with community partners, address the diverse needs of their student populations. The sites in this study largely set a high standard for themselves regarding holistic and coordinated student support, ensuring that students are well-equipped to succeed both academically and personally.

Integrated services ensure that every student feels welcomed and adequately supported. By understanding and addressing specific challenges faced by students in the community, these services not only provide empathetic educational support but also actively contribute to solving broader community issues, like housing and digital connectivity. Integrated, holistic support demonstrates a deep commitment to community development. The interviewees believe that the implementation of such services could significantly increase the likelihood of student success, especially for those grappling with unique personal and social challenges. Further, the interviewees conclude improved student retention could be a direct outcome of these tailored support services.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Examine the impact of the Regional Consortium structure on student performance and employment outcomes.

This research specifically focused on local programs. We noted that the move to a regional consortium structure, as required by AB86, was consistently referenced during our interviews. Many participants discussed the major system changes and the ability to transition students across the two institutional types. We recommend additional research focused on the regional level, guided by questions like:

- What are the defining features and functions across the continuum of regional consortia models, knowing that regions had wide latitude to structure their CAEP regional consortium across the past 10 years to fit their regional context?
- What do regional partnerships look like, and is there authentic systems change happening?
- In what ways has the intended 71 CAEP regional consortium approach affected CAEP student and community outcomes, if at all? How are regional partnerships scaled beyond one or two sites working together?

We did not originally design this study to collect data on the influence of the AB86 CAEP regional consortium structure. However, several staff stated the regional consortia structure created by AB86 and AB114 has seemed to have facilitated a deeper level of collaboration between adult schools and community colleges, especially with regards to developing student pathways and transitions.

As a follow-on to this research, a study could be designed to examine the factors specific to the CAEP regional consortia model and better understand what seems to make a difference in student outcomes related to transition, completion, and career metrics. This question could be addressed using a mixed methods approach that includes interviews with consortia members of community colleges and adult schools who were part of Adult Education before and after AB86, as well as data analysis investigating disaggregated student outcomes.

Validate the seven promising practices findings with more California adult schools and community colleges

This research has yielded promising findings, yet it was not meant to capture every promising practice, nor does it provide a representative sample of the 450 local programs delivering adult education services across 71 regional consortia in California. More research could be done to select more CAEP local programs sites and test to see if the seven promising practices still stand when using a larger sample size and other differentiating selection criteria.

We support a second phase of research that includes interviews at many more CAEP sites in California to corroborate, challenge, or add to these seven promising practices. We could hold up the Convergence Model for inquiry at more sites. In particular, including more CAEP sites in rural and northern locations will add to these promising practices.

Relatedly, replicating the study in other states may also yield additional insights, contributing to the growing body of national evidence on comprehensive convergence models.

Examine the student journey in learning English

Almost half (46%) of the students in the California Adult Education Program are enrolling primarily for language acquisition. A more detailed research study could focus on this participant population to examine promising practices at the member site level. How are programs able to move students into college or to work with stronger career mobility? What is the student journey for learning English? What types of services are accessible and do these services seem to make a difference? What are the prevalent on/off ramps for students and what are the promising practices for bridging these students at specific decision points to college, pre-apprenticeships, and/or to work with living wages? Is the immigrant student journey similar or different? How do academic plans affect the move toward integration?

CONCLUSION

What we have named the Convergence Model of Promising Practices emerged from our analysis of interviews with approximately 200 staff, students, instructors, and faculty from 12 adult schools and community colleges in California. These stakeholders described a connection between career, community, and education at their sites. Our findings highlight seven converging promising practices within and across these three domains that stakeholders in the selected local programs believe make a difference for adult learner success. While not every local program has demonstrated deep implementation of all seven promising practices, there is merit in considering how all CAEP sites in California and across the country could connect a comprehensive set of strategies to improve the lives of adult learners.

These findings offer hope, demonstrating how the seven promising practices, when integrated, may increase the number of CAEP students, especially Students of Color, succeeding in education and beyond.

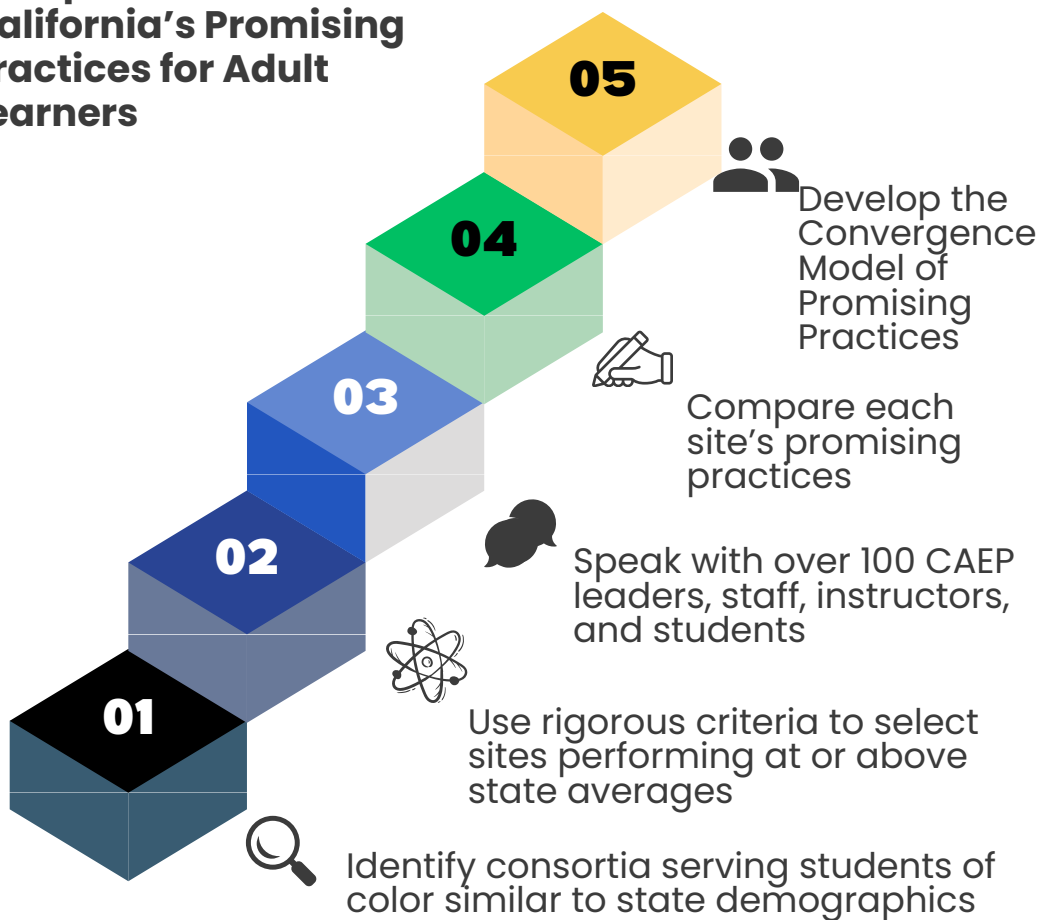
Following this report, we are committed, along with the CAEP staff, to make the research actionable. Our team will use the findings to inform state-wide professional development services. We will also coordinate with the state's cadre of technical assistance providers (TAPs) in 2024-25 and offer presentations about the research at several conferences and webinars in the spring and summer of 2024.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Research Background

This project began in January 2023 when the CAEP state office team wanted to identify and expand the positive practices that many adult schools and community colleges deliver across the state. Their idea was to study the practices employed by a small subset of community colleges and adult schools whose student performance and wage gains exceed the state average, especially for Students of Color. Subsequently, CAEP staff commissioned our research team to design and conduct an evidence-based study. We sought to identify promising practices from a set of CAEP sites and to support broader adoption across California and with other states. To support the learning and adoption of our findings, we set out to culminate our findings into a curated professional development plan.

5 Steps to Understand California's Promising Practices for Adult Learners





Our selection process for the 12 local programs involved a strategic and data-driven approach, summarized in the following steps:

- 1. Statewide Racial Demographic Comparison:** We first compared the racial demographics of California's population with those of students served by each of the 71 consortia.
- 2. Identification of Diverse Consortia:** This comparison led us to identify 13 regional consortia whose student populations mirrored the racial diversity of the state.
- 3. Development of Selection Criteria:** In collaboration with the CAEP state team, we established four CAEP performance indicators to guide this study, described in the next section. These indicators helped us formulate a selection criterion focused on programs serving racially diverse students who also achieved or exceeded state performance benchmarks in the key completion and employment outcomes.
- 4. Focus on Higher Performing Regions:** Our analysis then narrowed the field to six regional consortia demonstrating superior performance. We scrutinized these regions further to ensure they met our defined standards.
- 5. Final Selection of Local Programs:** Within these higher performing regional consortia, we selected a representative mix of six CAEP adult schools and six community colleges for our interviews. The chosen local programs were required to meet or surpass at least two of the four state averages for the specified completion and employment outcomes.


This rigorous process ensured our study concentrated on programs that not only reflect California's racial diversity but also exemplify higher achievement in significant educational and employment metrics.

CAEP Performance Indicators¹⁵

The following four indicators were selected:

- Progress measures the steps and milestones that students complete on their way to achieving a goal or program status.
- Transition measures students who move between programs or into other adult education or postsecondary opportunities.
- Completion measures students earning certificates, degrees, or other credentials.
- Employment measures the employment success that students achieve after completing their studies. This report employed the “Gap Analysis” metric, which examines the difference between the achievement of a group and the same achievement of the aggregate. Thus, this report focused on identifying entities (i.e., member sites) that perform well in specific indicators with specific demographic groups.

¹⁵ California Community College Chancellor's Office, Equitable Student Learning, Experience, and Impact Office. Examining CAEP student experiences through data: An analysis of the California adult education program. <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/report/CCCCO---CAEP-Report-2022-final.pdf>



With guidance from the CAEP team, we narrowed these four indicators down to four performance metrics across two indicator categories that we used to select the regional consortia to include in the study.

FOUR PERFORMANCE METRICS

Student Completion Outcomes:

1. Completed an educational functional level (i.e., ABE, ASE, ESL)
2. Earned a postsecondary non-degree certificate
3. Completed a postsecondary credential

Student Employment Outcomes:

4. Annual earnings compared to the living wage

Research Questions

1. **How are the selected sites' CAEP programs serving learners in their adult education programs, especially Students of Color?** What are the perceptions, experiences, and practices that program leaders and students believe are enabling or prohibiting racially minoritized students from reaching desired completion and employment outcomes?
2. **What are the factors (e.g., policy, funding, structure, partnerships) that influence program behavior of the selected sites?** How do these factors influence CAEP programs' ability to support completion and employment outcomes for racially minoritized students?

Interview Sampling Strategy

After identifying the 12 member sites, in September and October 2023 our research team conducted 11 full-day site visits and one virtual “site visit” with a rural CAEP site due to scheduling challenges. Two team members conducted the site visits, which included six to seven separate interviews per day with small groups of staff and instructors organized by role and function. During each full-day site visit, we engaged with 10-25 staff, instructors, and/or faculty, as well as student focus groups, ranging in size from 5-30 students. One site visit had no students due to not having classes that day.

The interviews explicitly targeted program leaders (including CAEP consortium leads, community college presidents and deans, adult school principals, and other program administrators), data leads, students, and instructors. In all, we engaged more than 100 staff and instructor interviewees and close to 100 students across the 12 sites.

CAEP Community College Interview Participant Roles

Data from the Community Colleges were collected from:

- Select Chief Instructional Officer (CIO)
- Community Education (CAEP) Dean/Program Director
- CTE/CAEP instructor panel: ESL, IET, and credit/noncredit postsecondary credentials
- Community Education CAEP student support services coordinator

- CAEP student success coaches
- CAEP day-to-day manager
- Institutional Research Office staff who manage CAEP student data/Management Information System (MIS)
- Career services staff who assist CAEP students with employment
- Community-based organization staff with integrated/embedded services
- WIOA partners with integrated/embedded services

Student Focus Group:

Priority ESL Levels 1-3 and/or 4-6, then IET classes, ABE classes

Adult School (K-12 CDE) Interview Participant Roles

Data from the Adult Schools were collected from:

- Principal/Assistant Principal with oversight of CAEP
- CAEP Program Director
- CAEP instructor panel: ESL, IET, and credit/noncredit postsecondary credentials
- CAEP Student support services coordinator
- CAEP transition specialists
- Administrative assistant and/or Institutional Research Office staff who manage CAEP student data collection and management
- Career services staff who assist CAEP students with employment or postsecondary transitions
- Community-based organization staff with integrated/embedded services
- WIOA partners with integrated/embedded services

Interview Topics

Administrators, staff, faculty, and instructor interviewees were invited to share strategies related to the following topics (which anchored the interview protocols):

- Structure/governance/policy factors for program success
- Transition support across the student journey and into careers
- Pathways strategies/completion support
- Student success factors
- Equity related approaches (i.e., serving SOC reflecting state racial/ethnic student demographics)
- Campus/school culture fostering promising outcomes
- Data collection and use of data for decisions/continuous improvement
- Educational and employment outcomes
- Teaching and learning factors of success
- Work-based and experiential learning opportunities

Students were invited to share their experiences, beliefs, and perspectives on the following topics (which anchored the interview protocols):

- Promising practices that the adult school or community college used that helped the student succeed
- How and why they selected their adult school or community college

- Guidance they received (or not) for career and instructional programs, including demand and wages for their selected programs
- Factors that contributed the most to their sense of belonging and success
- Future plans to continue into higher levels of learning or transition into careers
- Areas they wished they could change at the adult school or community college

Limitations

Over the course of the study, a few limitations emerged:

- This study is a purposeful sampling, not representative, so findings are not generalizable to all potential contexts.
- Similarly, based on the scope of work and project capacity, we conducted interviews with approximately 200 people (100 faculty, instructors, administrators, and staff, and nearly 100 students) across 12 member sites. However, more interviews are needed to reach saturation in the findings. Our findings are based on robust thematic coding, but saturation is difficult to reach with a limited number of interviews.
- Although the findings reflect the beliefs, perceptions, and experiences of the leaders and students we interviewed, we cannot assign causality of the promising practices to student outcomes. Our findings highlight potential factors believed to be contributing to the performance outcomes at these sites.
- While the sites demonstrated a level of implementation of the promising practices, not all of the sites had consistently applied the promising practices to their local context, with all of them acknowledging they had “more work to do.”

Data Collection and Analyses

Our data collection and analysis process was thorough and methodical, designed to ensure rigor and depth in our findings. Below is an overview of each step we took:

1. **Pilot Interview and Protocol Refinement:** After constructing our initial interview protocols, we conducted a pilot site visit with interviewees to calibrate questions, gather post-interview feedback from the interviewees, and revise the protocol as needed. This pilot interview was recorded and viewed by the research team to provide further feedback.
2. **Pre-Site Visit Preparation:** The research team held virtual “preparation” sessions with leads from each participating adult school or community college. These sessions aimed to clarify the visit's purpose, build rapport and trust, and assist leads in identifying appropriate staff and students for our research.
3. **On-Site Data Collection:** We spent six to seven hours on-site for each visit, interviewing a variety of executive leaders, student support staff, career service staff, front office staff, and student focus groups. Two team members conducted each interview, ensuring comprehensive data capture and transcription accuracy using a voice recognition app Otter, which records conversations in real time and recognizes different voice patterns for data collection.
4. **Data Transcription and Initial Coding:** Seventy transcripts were uploaded from Otter into Chat GPT, a digital AI-generated platform for initial coding. This stage involved both inductive and deductive methods to identify factors influencing student outcomes, challenges, benefits, strategies, and direct quotes.



5. **AI-Enhanced Thematic Analysis:** Utilizing AI tools and our own evaluation, we developed a two-part analytic process grounded in empirical research for thematic coding. This included creating a thematic coding schema for deductive coding and prompts for inductive coding, generating key themes from the AI's analysis.
6. **Frequency Analysis and Data Standardization:** The team performed a frequency analysis of common keywords and developed a uniform strategy to standardize the AI-generated and human-led thematic analysis for accuracy and consistency.
7. **Validation and Triangulation:** To validate our findings, the entire research team reviewed transcript summaries and key quotes. This triangulation process ensured our analysis was robust and reflective of the data collected.
8. **Weekly Researcher Team Discussions and Theme Development:** Our research team met weekly to discuss data patterns and key themes, engaging in an iterative process of identifying emerging themes, writing internal memos, and refining our analysis.
9. **Finalization of Themes and Promising Practices:** Through collaborative team discussions, we challenged, revised, and finalized themes, findings, and their meanings. We identified a recurring attribution to student success across the themes of career, community, and education, culminating in the development of seven promising practices using the Convergence Model.

This structured yet flexible approach allowed us to stay close to our collected data while leveraging both AI for an initial set of factors, then human expertise to uncover the overarching story and key insights.

Products and Materials

Our research team committed to providing the following products and materials to support the research and share the 12 sites' practices across CAEP programs and the nation:

- Fall retreat in October 2023 with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) and the California Department of Education (CDE)
- Full report with promising practices and relevant findings for adult education practitioners
- Executive summary slide deck for multiple stakeholder presentations
- National briefing of the findings (virtual) with over 300 CAEP stakeholders and state agencies, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE), and national intermediaries and research organizations (February 26, 2024)
- Dissemination plan for our research team to present the findings at five state conferences in California from March-June 2024
- Professional development plan written in partnership with multiple CAEP Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) for their mobilization across 2024-2025 professional development events



Appendix B: Definitions

ABE/ASE: The Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE)/High School Equivalency Preparation programs serve adults who have not completed a high school equivalency (HSE).

California Adult Education Program (CAEP): Established by law in 2015, CAEP brings together the extensive system of California Department of Education’s Adult Schools and close to 100 California Community Colleges to deliver services to adult education students. Under this program, which is jointly administered by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) and the Superintendent of Public Instruction,¹⁶ the Chancellor and the Superintendent, with the advice of the Executive Director of the State Board of Education, divided the state into 71 regional Adult Education consortia.¹⁷ More than a million students who enroll in noncredit community colleges and K-12 adult education programs funded by CAEP have an opportunity for moving on to transfer-level coursework and/or the workforce.

Campus: Campus refers to a high school campus, community college campus, or an adult school.

Career Mobility: While mobility has traditionally been defined as climbing the ladder, we expand this view to incorporate the process of employees transitioning to lateral roles, advocating for specialized project assignments, and/or exploring flexible career options that benefit both the worker and the employer. In the context of this report, we believe that adult schools and community colleges are responsible for ensuring learners understand their career mobility when selecting or completing career technical education. For example, these programs should inform students whether there are sufficient in-demand jobs with living wages, with opportunities for related work experience, to enhance career mobility.

Career Pathways: Career pathways in the context of education, particularly within community college, adult basic education, and K-12 programs serving adults, refer to coordinated and cohesive educational routes that are strategically designed to align with specific learning outcomes and career goals. These pathways provide a clear and streamlined progression for learners, ensuring their educational journey is purposeful and directly connected to their desired outcomes. The curricula, assessments, and support services are intentionally structured to create a seamless transition between different levels of education. This coordination involves careful planning and collaboration among educators, administrators, industry professionals, and other stakeholders. This often incorporates stackable credentials, industry-recognized certifications, and work-based learning experiences.

16 California Department of Education. (2023). State Funding: CAEP. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/sf/index.asp>

17 California Department of Education. (2024). Program Overview: CAEP. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/index.asp>

18 Department of Labor and Industry. Policy Guidance: Co-enrollment. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/jobcorps/JC%20Scholars/Policy%20Guidance/Co-Enrollment.pdf>



Co-Enrollment: This term applies to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, as students/clients may be registered at both a community college and an adult school taking adult school or noncredit college coursework.¹⁸ Co-enrollment also allows access to training dollars for Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways.

Consortia sites or ‘member sites’: Generally, we refer to member sites as the actual physical location of a community college campus, adult school, or local program where CAEP students enroll and engage directly in instruction and other services. AB 104 states that any community college district, county office of education, joint powers authority or school district located within the boundaries of the adult education region shall be a member of a consortium if it receives specific funds from programs, including WIOA Title II and Perkins.¹⁹ The 12 member sites selected for this research included seven local adult schools and five community colleges where CAEP programs are housed and services delivered.

Integrated Education and Training (IET): Integrated Education and Training (IET) is one of the strategies adopted by community colleges and adult schools to both build adults’ basic skills and accelerate pathways to higher education and careers. IET has been implemented in California for over a decade, and since 2014, it has been codified in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).²⁰ CAEP promotes an IET framework that integrates the delivery of (a) adult education and literacy activities, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), adult basic education, or high school diploma/High School Equivalency classes; (b) workforce preparation activities that address employability skills, such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and self-management; and (c) workforce training activities for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.²¹ IET’s three components are provided concurrently (rather than sequentially) and contextually (through integration), and they are part of a career pathway that furthers the student’s educational and career advancement.

Transition Specialist: These staff members guide students through their educational journey. This definition came from our data. Often, other terms, such as success coach, are used interchangeably. For this report, the role of a transition specialist is to provide support, resources, and information to help students through the complexities of academic programs, administrative processes, and career pathways.

Promising Practice: Primarily, promising practices refer to approaches and strategies identified by participants that are believed to positively influence CAEP programs’ outcomes. These practices were documented as factors that support positive completion and employment outcomes, particularly for racially minoritized students. These practices encompass various aspects, including programmatic processes, student-centered approaches, collaborative infrastructure, workforce alignment, career mobility initiatives, and effective communication strategies. Participants highlight these practices as valuable and impactful in fostering engagement, success, and career readiness among students, contributing to the overall effectiveness of CAEP programs.

¹⁹ California Department of Education. AB 104 Fact Sheet. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/ps/ab104factsheet.asp>

²⁰ US Department of Education. Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Resource Guide. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/aefta-resource-guide.pdf>

²¹ US Department of Education Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Integrated Education and Training (IET) Guide. https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/IET_checklist508FINAL_0.pdf



Appendix C: About Barbara Endel Consulting

Barbara Endel Consulting is an independent research and consultant team specializing in system-building, research, and strategy development for innovation in adult education and workforce development. Researchers contributing to this project include:

Dr. Monique O. Ositelu is an entrepreneur, author, data strategist, former federal education policy advisor, keynote speaker, college instructor, and a national college advocate for equity and socioeconomic mobility. While starting her data consulting firm, Itàn, she served as a Senior Policy Advisor for Data & Research at New America. She conducted policy research and data analysis for college access and completion for historically underserved students (including Students of Color, low-income students enrolled in short-term CTE programs, and incarcerated learners). She consulted with federal Congressional policymakers and the Executive branch on equitable policy development, recently influencing federal legislation to reinstate Pell Grants for incarcerated learners. She also actively consults as an international subject matter expert, where she's advised prime ministers from over 40 countries on financing policies to include adult learners from diverse backgrounds into higher education.

Dr. Barbara Endel is principal lead for this project. She is a well-respected adult education (AE) system change leader, helping state and local AE programs bridge AE into careers and in-demand credentials. She has worked with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office on several projects, including support for Vision Destination Goals and executive team leadership development. Dr. Endel is also a Senior Advisor to Jobs for the Future and AIR, and she consults with adult education and community college systems across the country on establishing Integrated Education and Training programs. Barbara has a bachelor's degree from the College of Wooster (OH) and a master's and doctorate from the University of Iowa.

Maggie Snyder is a co-principal lead for this project and an independent consultant. Maggie supports foundations, research organizations, higher education systems, and nonprofits to advance postsecondary education and improve equitable economic opportunity. Her work focuses on strategy development, initiative implementation, primary research, synthesis and analysis, report writing, and process documentation. Formerly at ECMC Foundation, Maggie supported a career readiness portfolio with more than 30 grantees. Maggie has a bachelor's degree from Denison University and a Master of Public Policy from Vanderbilt University.

Julie Clark is a leading adult education professional specializing in upskilling opportunities by establishing productive relationships with adult education partners and community colleges. Julie helped launch Tyson Foods pilot Integrated Education and Training programs in several states. She has experience with industry-based English Language Learning, High School Equivalency, and programs with multiple industry partners. Prior to joining Tyson, Julie was an adult education coordinator creating articulation agreements with technical colleges, schools, and local 4-year institutions to assist students in seamless transitions.



Dr. Emma Diaz has more than 30 years of experience in the fields of healthcare and education. She is currently the director for the Inland Adult Education Consortium in San Bernardino, CA, where she manages the implementation of the California Adult Education Program legislation. As director, she has played a leadership role by creating and expanding adult educational programs across the region. She is President-Elect of the Association of Community and Continuing Education and participates regularly on state level advisory groups, presents at regional, state, and national conferences, and is an international lecturer and published author.

Dr. Debra Bragg is a Senior Advisor for this project. She founded two research centers: the Community College Research Initiatives (University of Washington) and the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (University of Illinois). She led numerous studies of career pathways, including studies of community college bachelor's degrees. In 2015, Debra was named a fellow of the American Educational Research Association, and in 2016 she received the Distinguished Career Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Special thanks to Dr. Colleen Pawlicki of Troy Street Professional Services in the editing and design of this report.



Appendix D: References and Data Sources

California Adult Education Program. (n.d.). Consortium directory. <https://caladulthood.org/ConsortiumDirectory>

California Adult Education Program. (n.d.). Three-year plan 2022-2025 guidance. <https://caladulthood.org/DownloadFile/1235>

California Community College Chancellor's Office, Equitable Student Learning, Experience, and Impact Office. (2022). Examining CAEP student experiences through data: An analysis of the California adult education program. <https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/docs/report/CCCCO---CAEP-Report-2022-final.pdf>

California Community Colleges. (n.d.). The California adult education program frequently asked questions. <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Workforce-and-Economic-Development/California-Adult-Education-Program/caep-faqs>

California Community Colleges. (n.d.). Vision 2030. <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Vision-2030>

California Department of Education. (n.d.). AB 104 Fact Sheet. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/ps/ab104factsheet.asp>

California Department of Education. (2023). Asset-based pedagogies. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/assetbasedpedagogies.asp>

California Department of Education. (2023). State funding: CAEP. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/sf/index.asp>

Cal-PASS Plus. (2024). Adult education pipeline overview. Cal-PASS Plus (2024) <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>

CUNY. (n.d.). Accelerated study in associate programs: About. <https://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/about/>

Economic Research Service, US Department of Agriculture. (2023, July 26). Atlas of rural and small-town America. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/go-to-the-atlas/>

National Reporting System for Adult Education. (2023). Table 4: Measurable skills gain by entry level: California. <https://nrs.ed.gov/states/ca>

Students at the Center Hub. (n.d.). The students at the center framework. <https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/framework/>

The Institute for College Access and Success. (n.d.). Comprehensive approaches to student success programs. <https://ticas.org/our-work/college-completion-2/comprehensive-approaches-to-student-success-programs-nationwide-by-state-and-institution/>

US Department of Education. (n.d.). Adult education and family literacy act (AEFLA) resource guide. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/aepla-resource-guide.pdf>

US PIAAC. (n.d.). US skills map: State and county indicators of adult literacy and numeracy. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>





BARBARA ENDEL CONSULTING