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Restructuring California's Adult Education System

LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

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Education
Hon. Marty Block, Chair





Background

- Adult Education Has Multiple Purposes**
 - Primary purpose is to provide adults with the precollegiate knowledge and skills they need to participate in civic life and the workforce.
 - Other purposes include offering enrichment classes to older adults and providing instruction on effective parenting techniques.

- Adult Schools (Run by School Districts) and California Community Colleges (CCC) Are the State’s Main Providers**

- Community Colleges Can Offer Adult Education on “Credit” or “Noncredit” Basis**

Adult Education Includes a Wide Array of Instructional Areas			
Instructional Area	Adult Schools	CCC Noncredit	CCC Credit
Adults with disabilities	X	X	X
Apprenticeship	X	X	X
Vocational education ^a	X	X	X
Immigrant education (citizenship and workforce preparation)	X	X	
Elementary and secondary education	X	X	X
English as a second language	X	X	X
Health and safety ^b	X	X	X
Home economics	X	X	
Older adults	X	X	
Parenting	X	X	

^a Also referred to in statute as career technical education.
^b Includes exercise and fitness classes.



Background

(Continued)



Adult Schools Have Historically Been Funded Through a Restricted Categorical Program

- In early 2009, the Legislature allowed school districts to use adult education categorical funds for any educational purpose.
- Only between 40 percent to 50 percent of the \$635 million in the categorical program likely is now being spent on adult education. Given current funding rules, school districts effectively determine their own per-student funding rate.



CCC Adult Education Instruction Is Funded Through Apportionments

- In 2011-12, CCC spent approximately \$1.4 billion in apportionments on adult education—about \$1.2 billion for credit instruction and about \$200 million for noncredit instruction.
- CCC currently receives \$4,565 per student for credit, \$3,232 per student for “enhanced” noncredit, and \$2,745 per student for regular noncredit instruction.



Each Segment Also Has an Apprenticeship Categorical Program

- \$15.7 million for school districts (currently a restricted categorical program).
- \$7.2 million for CCC (currently a “flexed” categorical program).



The California Department of Education (CDE) Administers the Federal Adult Education Program

- In 2011-12, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provided the state with a total of \$91 million to support adult education programs at 169 adult schools and 17 community colleges (as well as various other providers).
- The CDE allocates federal adult education funds to providers based on student learning gains and other outcomes.



LAO Assessment of the State's Current System



California's Adult Education System Has Some Key Strengths

- Two large segments with extensive experience working with adult learners.
- Testing and data system that can measure learning gains for students.
- Innovative state policy that allocates WIA funds to providers based on performance.



The State's Adult Education System Also Has a Number of Problems

- Overly broad mission.
- Lack of a clear and consistent distinction between adult education and collegiate instruction at CCC.
- Inconsistent and conflicting state-level policies for adult schools and CCC.
- Limited intersegmental coordination.
- Gaps in data systems, which make oversight difficult.



Governor's Proposal

- Folds School District Adult Education Categorical Funds Into K-12 Funding Formula**
 - School districts would be permitted to continue operating adult schools using various funds, including general-purpose state funds, federal WIA funds, and fee revenue.

- Creates a New \$300 Million CCC Categorical Program for Adult Education**
 - Funds would be distributed to CCC districts on a formula basis (prior-year enrollments).
 - CCC districts could provide instruction directly to adult learners or contract with school districts (adult schools) to provide instruction.

- Limits CCC Apportionments to Credit Instruction Only**
 - CCC could still offer adult education on credit basis.

- Shifts School Districts' Apprenticeship Categorical Funds to New CCC Apprenticeship Program**

- Focuses Core Mission of Adult Education for CCC**

- Does Not Propose to Change WIA Administrator**



LAO Assessment of Governor's Proposal

- Many Community Colleges Would Face Significant Challenges in Assuming New Responsibilities for Adult Education**
- If Adult Schools Were to Continue Operating on Their Own, Longstanding Problems Would Remain**
- Irrational Funding Structure for Adult Education Would Be Perpetuated**
- Fewer Students Likely Would Be Served in Adult Education**
- Proposed Method of Allocating Funds Would Not Address Local Service Disparities**
- Ongoing Data Problems Would Not Be Addressed**
- Unclear Benefits of Shifting Apprenticeship Funds to CCC and Creating New Program**
- No Justification for Allowing State Support to Be Used for Different Instructional Areas at Adult Schools and CCC**



LAO Recommendations

- ☑ Recommend the Legislature leverage the comparative advantages of both adult schools and CCC and create a more focused and collaborative system of adult education.

- ☑ **Specifically:**
 - Approve the Governor's proposal to reduce CCC's authorized state-supported noncredit instructional programs from ten to six. Focus state support on the same six instructional areas for adult schools.
 - Provide a clear and consistent distinction at CCC between adult education and collegiate instruction.
 - Resolve inconsistent and conflicting policies regarding faculty qualifications, student assessment, and fees at adult schools and CCC.
 - Approve Governor's proposal to fold \$635 million in adult education flexed categorical funds into K-12 funding formula, then provide up to \$300 million in base funding in 2013-14 for a reconstituted, restricted adult education categorical program. Allocate these funds to school districts based on the amount of General Fund monies they are currently spending on adult education. Consolidate school districts' apprenticeship categorical funds (\$15.7 million) within school districts' reconstituted adult education categorical program.
 - Provide adult schools and CCC with the same noncredit funding rate.
 - Gradually reallocate providers' base budgets on basis of both enrollment and performance. Allocate new funds for adult education based on regional needs.
 - Promote coordination by adopting common course numbering for adult education.
 - Create a linked data system for adult schools and CCC.