As states struggle to compete in a global economy, the presence of a skilled workforce is a key part of the equation. *ABE to Credentials* meets the challenge head on. The initiative is based on the core belief that postsecondary credentials and education beyond high school are the gateway to family-supporting wages and critical to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty in America.

*ABE to Credentials* supports states across the country to ensure that more workers have the skills they need for today’s good jobs. Through innovative adult education that leads to valuable credentials, this four-year multistate initiative seeks to fundamentally:

- Change the way Adult Basic Education (ABE) is structured and delivered at state and institutional levels.
- Ensure that state policies encourage dramatically improved results in terms of the number of individuals who complete credentials of value in the labor market.
- Substantially increase the number of adults who can earn a GED and a credential and enter the workplace with competitive skills.

Moreover, only a fraction of this population—just over 2.5 million adults—enrolls in Adult Basic Education programs, even though ABE is the first step back on track to higher skills and postsecondary credentials. Many adults leave after one or two semesters due to personal or family circumstances—outcomes that could be prevented if colleges and community partners offered appropriate structures and adequate supports.

This initiative will increase credential attainment using evidence-based instructional and organizational models. It builds on the successes of both the Breaking Through initiative and Washington State’s experience implementing and scaling up Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST).

**WHAT ABE TO CREDENTIALS WILL ACHIEVE**

With bold goals for improving students’ outcomes and gaining state-level policy support, *ABE to Credentials* will engage at least 40 community colleges across the country to reach over 18,000 adult learners who will attain credentials, earn 12 college-level credits or more, and increase their readiness to succeed in college. *ABE to Credentials* will enable these students to gain skills they need for employment in career pathways and succeed by addressing policy, systemic, and programmatic barriers.
WHY I-BEST?

To help lower-skilled learners progress further and faster along career and educational pathways, I-BEST’s accelerated, integrated instructional model pairs ABE and professional-technical instructors in the classroom to advance student gains concurrently in both basic education content and professional-technical skills. Based on data from 2006 and 2007:

• I-BEST students were far more likely to earn college credits and credentials than their counterparts in regular ABE/GED/ESL programs.

• 61 percent of I-BEST ABE/GED students earned 15 college-level credits—a key milestone and predictor of success in college—by the end of the academic year, compared to 32 percent in regular ABE/GED/ESL programs.

• 26 percent earned 30 college-level credits, compared to 11 percent in regular programs.

• I-BEST students were three times more likely to earn college credit and nine times more likely to earn an award than ABE students in other workforce programs.

WHY BREAKING THROUGH?

Breaking Through, a national initiative launched in 2004, has identified specific barriers to success for ABE students and developed strategies to address those issues. Studies of the colleges involved in the scaling-up phase of the initiative indicate positive results for lower-skilled learners. For example:

• Durham Technical Community College, North Carolina: 66 percent of Breaking Through students moved up to grade 9.0 or higher from 6.0 to 8.9 based on TABE scores, versus 56 percent of a comparison group.

• Lake Michigan College, Michigan: 94 percent of Breaking Through scaling-up students completed the initial program they enrolled in, versus 62 percent of those in a comparison group; 94 percent completed a College Success course with a grade of C or better, versus 21 percent of the comparison group.

• Tacoma Community College, Washington: 31 percent of Breaking Through students earned college-level credits within two quarters, versus 4 percent in the comparison group.

ABE TO CREDENTIALS PARTNERS

ABE to Credentials partners are the National Council on Workforce Education, National College Transition Network and the Washington State Board of Community & Technical Colleges. The initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with additional funding to be announced.

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