



What's Next? Renewed Advocacy More Critical than Ever!

Heading into year three of the Adult Education Block Grant (AEBG), adult schools and community colleges continue to make strides in collaborating and serving adult students in need for basic skills, ESL, citizenship, short term career training, and more. Unfortunately, however, that great work and the vital role adult schools play in the dual delivery system that is AEBG is not being sufficiently conveyed to the Legislature at the local level. As such, it would seem that adult education is again slowly sinking back in to the background to be the best kept secret again in education. This is problematic on many levels - particularly at a time when funding for adult schools is almost exclusively coming via AEBG and the resources aren't matching the needs in regions across the state. The policy-makers need to know about K-12 adult education and the unique population we serve.

Further, as a result of the disconnected data and accountability systems between adult schools and our community college partners, three years in to AEBG we are having difficulty proving our successes. The inability to document our success and account for the over \$1.5 billion over the last few years is resulting in mounting tension in the Capitol at a time when the Legislature should be scrambling to further invest in the adult education system under AEBG. Despite statewide adult education advocacy efforts this budget cycle, adult education was the only system that did not receive some semblance of a funding increase or COLA. This is highly concerning, particularly as we see the needs increasing statewide, immigrant communities desperately in search of safe environments to access training, homelessness skyrocketing, and sectors like healthcare in desperate search of adults who have skill sets provided for as part of adult education's short-term career programming. Support for adult education and AEBG should be a slam dunk and seen as a cost-effective, successful avenue by which to take advantage of pathways and opportunities to move adults in to postsecondary education and the workforce. Instead, tensions are mounting and we're feeling like we are back on the brink of tough times.

The good news - it's early and we're ramping up our advocacy efforts for the next year and budget cycle! However, we cannot do it alone - we need you!

As we've discussed many times, success can be viewed in the context of a three legged stool - where grassroots advocacy, political engagement and lobbying come together is where success is found. Over the past couple of months, the leadership of CCAE and CAEAA have put together an [advocacy plan for FY 17-18](#) that will help promote adult education and specifically adult schools, paving the pathway for further investment in AEBG and better solidifying the critical dual delivery system that provides numerous on-ramps for adult students looking for pathways to postsecondary education and the workforce. The plan ([here](#)) is comprehensive - utilizing strategies that touch each leg of the stool to help ensure success. It will be a multi-faceted effort that will consist of state-based activities and those you will undertake at the local level. While I can appreciate how much you all have on your plate already, but the lack of visibility is a problem which could mean disaster for adult education if left to fester unaddressed. In this regard, your efforts at the local level will be a critical component of the success we all hope to achieve in the FY 18-19 budget cycle that will hopefully entail increased resources and a stronger AEBG dual delivery system.

So, what should you be doing now?

First, all adult schools should revise/create a fact sheet (one-page, back and front is okay) that provides an overview of your adult school, programs offered, students served, career pathway information, partnerships, regional consortium identification, etc. This needs to be completed by mid-September in preparation for state and local advocacy this fall. Upon completion, each adult school should send a copy to CCAE and CAEAA and prepare to include it in future packets for local grassroots advocacy efforts. See attached sample fact sheet, but feel free to develop something different that better suits your adult school.

Second, as we begin a new school year all adult schools should maintain some semblance of a list and/or headcount (can be informal) of students seeking services, but who were turned away due to capacity challenges as well as any information you may have about where/if they go somewhere else. Certainly the Annual Plans to be turned in this month will contain these data about unmet need and it is critical this information be highlighted in our advocacy as well. We've spoken at length the last couple of years about the fact that the current AEBG funding isn't sufficient to serve the needs; however, to date this has been merely anecdote. Sure, we have population data and demographics that help speak to the needs not being served, but we need better information regarding who actually comes to the door but is turned away due to a lack of capacity. If you are in an adult school that has spent your AEBG allocation and is turning away students because you cannot expand your capacity, your rough data on students turned away is critically important to receive.

Additionally as you know, this year we attempted to obtain a COLA to provide some meager funding cushion for adult schools whose costs have increased but AEBG allocation has not. We fully understand the rising costs will ultimately impact access and capacity at adult schools who may have - and some who already have - to ultimately cut classes in order to remain within budget. Unfortunately, we've been chastised for asking for more resources when not all consortia have spent the allocation they've received. In this regard, we ask that you provide insight to CCAE and CAEAA about whether you've spent all of your AEBG allocation to date and why you've not if that is the case. Additionally, we need to know if you and those in your consortia have not spent the allocated AEBG resources, do you have a plan to spend it down in this budget year? Although each consortium reports what they have not spent, we need to know more specifically about what K-12 adult schools are doing and what they might need. Without being able to better understand what is really happening in the field and why some consortia and/or members are not spending their allocation, we cannot adequately respond to the criticism so as to help those who are spending their allocations to maximize access and programming for as many students as possible.

Finally, in the next two months, we ask that you do the following simple things:

- All students, classified staff, teachers and administrators sign up for their local elected Senator's and Assembly member's electronic newsletter. You merely go to the following site <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>, enter your home address, click on the members' links and sign up for their newsletters on their websites. These newsletters will provide information about what is going on in the district, including office and sidewalk hours when anyone from their district is welcome to drop in to say hello and get to know the member.**
- Identify and collect logos and names of your key partners (i.e. Board of Supervisors, school board members, community based organizations, workforce development boards, etc.). Include the list in an attachment to your adult school fact sheet and have them handy to use in upcoming letters, grassroots advocacy, etc.**
- If you meet with your elected officials, please let CCAE and CAEAA know by including the meeting and conversation information in the CCAE app under that legislator's tab.**

If all adult schools tackled these few items in the next two months, we would be well on our way to the next steps in our advocacy plan. Your engagement and support is critical to paving the path forward for adult education to be a key component in the FY 18-19 budget next budget cycle.

We hope you are up to the task of being a critical partner in this effort. Ultimately, this is all focused on placing additional pressure to further support adult education in the Governor's January 2018 roll-out of the FY 18-19 budget package. Later this fall, we'll be coming back to you with talking points, specific member meet-and-greet details, PR activities, letter writing campaigns, and much more. Thank you in advance for your engagement - strength in numbers!!!