



Case Study: Work Readiness

Issue

Adult educators often struggle with curriculum that prepares students for GED or technical certification exams but not the workplace. Without a meaningful career path component, once students passed the test, their outcomes were limited.

Challenges

Educators in three different settings and systems—a large school district in Tampa, Fla., a city college consortium in Chicago, Ill., and a community college in Huntsville, Ala.—all faced a similar situation, summed up by Willie Eller of Florida:

“Before, we were kind of a GED factory. Students would pass the test, and we’d say, ‘Okay, go!’ But they didn’t know where to go.”

Students who complete an equivalency degree can still lack practical skills and clear career direction, which leaves them at a disadvantage in the workplace. And for employers, seeing too many adult ed graduates who can’t perform common work-related tasks can sour them on hiring more.

Joseph Tully, who teaches at Malcolm X College in urban Chicago, stresses how important work readiness is to his students.

“Adult ed programs, nationally, are moving toward enabling students to come out of our schools being able to successfully market themselves to the workplace,” Tully said.

In Huntsville, Chris Miller works with a diverse population that includes military families, non-native speakers, and pre-release programs for two prisons.

“Our population is very transient, but if we can keep them in the classroom, they’ll see the long-term benefits,” she said.

Solution

All three programs adopted *Workforce Connects* to give students career path and skill support.

“It gives students options they may have never thought about. They can read first-hand from people who do that job every day” Miller said.

The program combines career exploration with curriculum lessons in core skills such as math, reading, and writing. Eller calls it a “culture change,” one that allows students time in the classroom to develop career pathways, supported by tech-savvy and well-trained teachers.

“They started seeing possibilities they hadn’t even been aware of,” he said.

Tully agrees. “It exposes students who have traditionally been locked out to a viable career path.”

Benefits

The exposure to career options, combined with a meaningful tool to explore them, yielded immediate benefits.

“I had a student who wanted to be a roofer once he got his GED,” Tully said. “I said, ‘Great, let’s find out how you join the union as one of your reading assignments.’”

By the end of the semester, that student had decided he no longer wanted to be just a roofer—he wanted to own his own roofing company someday.

“When you see that kind of transition, that kind of opening of the imagination—his world is opening up, and I credit *Workforce Connects*. That’s where he got the career information that made the difference.”