



IOWA'S ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

**ANNUAL
BENCHMARK
REPORT**

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

Iowa Department
of Education

**Program Year 2001
July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001**

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INTRODUCTION AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The purpose of this publication is to present the Executive Summary of the first annual report on the results of Iowa's adult basic education program benchmarks. The passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 [Public Law 105-220] by the 105th Congress has ushered in a new era of collaboration, coordination, cooperation and accountability. The overall goal of the Act is "to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and, as a result improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation." The key principles inculcated in the Act are:

- Streamlining services;
- Empowering individuals;
- Universal access;
- Increased accountability;
- New roles for local boards;
- State and local flexibility;
- Improved youth programs.

The purpose of The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), enacted as Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, is to create a partnership among the Federal government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult basic education and literacy services in order to:

- Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
- Assist adults who are parents obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children;
- Assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.

One of the major intents of AEFLA was to establish performance measures and benchmarks to demonstrate increased accountability in line with the major goals and objectives of WIA. When AEFLA was reauthorized in 1998, Congress made accountability for results a central focus of the new law, setting out new performance accountability requirements for States and local programs that measure program effectiveness on the basis of student academic achievement and competency-based outcomes. Section 212(2)(A) of the Act specifies that each eligible agency (i.e. The Iowa Department of Education and local grant recipients) is subject to certain core indicators of performance and has the authority to specify additional indicators. The core indicators are:

- Demonstrated improvement in literacy skill levels in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem solving, English language acquisition, and other literacy skills;
- Placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement;
- Receipt of an [adult] secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent [Iowa High School Equivalency Diploma].

The Iowa basic skills core percentage benchmarks were established utilizing the Adult Education Government Performance Review Act (GPRA) indicator model disseminated by the U.S. Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (USDE:DAEL). The Act [Section 212(2)(B)] also authorizes the Iowa Department of Education to identify additional indicators of performance for adult basic education and literacy activities.

The additional indicator established for Iowa's statewide basic skills programs was the inclusion of the Iowa Basic Skills Certification Program. The certification program was pilot tested for one year (1997) by four community college pilot sites. The results indicated that this program is a valid and reliable program performance indicator.

OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM MEASURES AND METHODS

NRS Measures

The *requirements of WIA*, *consensus* among the stakeholders and advisory board members, and the *need for uniform valid and reliable data* were major factors guiding development of the National Reporting System (NRS) measures. Other factors affecting development of the measures included the need to *accommodate the diversity* of the adult basic education delivery system and the need for *compatibility of the definitions* with related adult basic education and training programs.

As a state-administered program, the nature of adult basic education service delivery varies widely across states in its goals, objectives and the resources available to states to collect and report data. It is especially important that the definitions for outcome measures be broad enough to accommodate these differences, yet concrete and standardized sufficiently to allow the NRS to establish a uniform, national database. Similarly, other adult education programs, employment and training programs with whom adult education cooperates have systems of accountability and outcome measures.

The NRS includes two types of measures (1) core, and (2) secondary. The core measures apply to all adult basic education students receiving 12 or more hours of service. There are three types of core measures:

- **Outcome measures**, which include educational gain, entered employment, retained employment, receipt of secondary school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) and placement in postsecondary education or training;

- **Descriptive measures**, including student demographics, reasons for attending and student status; and
- **Participation measures** of contact hours received and enrollment in instructional programs for special populations or topics (such as Family Literacy or Workplace Literacy).

The NRS *secondary* measures include additional outcome measures related to employment, family and community that adult education stakeholders believe are important to understanding and evaluating adult basic education programs. States are *not required to report on the secondary measures* and there are no performance standards tied to them. The optional secondary measures will not be used as a basis for incentive grant awards. There are also secondary student status measures that define target populations identified in WIA. These measures are provided for states that want to report on the services provided to these populations.

Core Outcome Measures

The central measures of the NRS are the student *outcome* measures. While by no means the only measures that could be used to evaluate adult basic education programs, the outcome measures selected represent what a broad consensus of adult educators believe are appropriate for providing a national picture of the performance of the program. The multi-year process employed by the NRS to identify and define the measures included input from State Directors of Adult Education, Federal education officials, local education providers, representatives of volunteer literacy organizations and experts in performance accountability systems.

The five NRS core outcome measures were selected to address the requirements for core indicators of performance in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of the WIA. Exhibit 1 shows how the core measures relate to these requirements and goals for adult basic education as stated in the legislation.

Exhibit 1
**Goals and Core Indicators of the Adult Education
and Family Literacy Act and NRS Core Outcome Measures**

Goals of Adult Basic Education Described in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act	Core Indicators Required by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act	National Reporting System Core Outcome Measures
Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency.	Improvements in literacy skill levels in reading, writing and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem-solving, English language acquisition, other literacy skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Educational gains (achieve skills to advance educational functioning level)
Assist parents to obtain the skills necessary to be full partners in their children's educational development. Placement in, retention in, or completion of, postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement.	Placement in, retention in, or completion of, postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Entered employment ▲ Retained employment ▲ Placement in postsecondary education or training
Assist adults in the completion of secondary school education.	Receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Receipt of a secondary school diploma or pass GED tests.

Educational gain, a key outcome in the NRS, provides a measure of student literacy gains resulting from instruction. This measure applies to all students in the program (except pre-designated “work-based project learners”). To determine this measure, local programs assess students on intake to determine their *educational functioning level*. There are four levels for adult basic education (ABE), two for adult secondary education (ASE) and six levels of English-as-a Second Language students (ESL). Each level describes a set of skills and competencies that students entering at that level can do in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, listening, functional and workplace areas. Using these descriptors as guidelines, programs determine the appropriate initial level in which to place students using a standardized assessment procedure (a test or performance-based assessment). The program decides the skill areas in which to assess the student, based on student’s instructional needs and goals.

Exhibit 2

Relationship Between Instructional Programs And Educational Functioning Levels

NRS Instructional Program	Educational Functioning Level	CASAS Instructional Level	CASAS Standard Score Range
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	ABE Beginning Literacy	Level A	Under 200
	ABE Beginning Basic Education	Level B	201 to 210
	ABE Intermediate Low	Level B	211 to 220
	ABE Intermediate High	Level C	221 to 235
Adult Secondary Education (ASE)	ASE Low	Level D	236 to 245
	ASE High	Level E	246 and Above
ESL/ESL/ Citizenship (ESL)	ESL Beginning Literacy	Level A	165 to 180
	ESL Beginning	Level A	181 to 200
	ESL Intermediate Low	Level B	201 to 210
	ESL Intermediate High	Level B	210 to 220
	ESL Advanced Low	Level C	221 to 235
	ESL Advanced High	Level D, E	236 to 245

After a pre-determined amount of instruction or time period determined by each state, the program conducts follow-up assessments of students in the same skill areas and uses the functioning level descriptors to determine whether the student has advanced one or more levels or is progressing within the same level. The state has discretion to establish the student assessment method used within the state, as well as procedures for progress assessment. States may also use additional educational levels and skill area descriptors, as long as they are compatible with NRS levels and skills. Exhibit 2 displays the relationship among the: (1) major instructional programs, (2) educational functioning levels within each major instructional program, (3) Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment system (CASAS) instructional levels, and (4) CASAS standard score range for each educational functioning level.

The remaining core outcome measures are *follow-up* measures, reported some time after the student leaves the program. However, the follow-up measures apply only to students who enter the program with goals related to the measures. For unemployed students who enter the program with a goal of obtaining employment, there are two measures: entered employment—whether the student obtained a job by the end of the first quarter after leaving; and retained employment—whether the student still has the job in the third quarter after exit. This measure also applies to employed students who have a goal of improved or retained employment. For students whose goal is to advance to further education or training, there is a measure of entry into another such program. For students who entered with a goal of obtaining a secondary school diploma or passing the GED tests, there is a measure of whether the student obtained the credential.

IOWA'S BENCHMARK RESULTS

This section is designed to report on Iowa's statewide literacy program benchmarks for Program Year 2001 (July 1, 2000 - June 30, 2001). The section titled *Iowa's Adult Literacy Benchmark* provides an overall state adult literacy benchmark to be achieved by 2010. This benchmark statement was designated as the literacy benchmark statement to be incorporated into the overall Iowa Community College benchmark document. The other sections depict an overview of each core set of benchmarks which include: (1) educational gains, (2) adult learner follow-up measures, and (3) number of basic skill certificates issued.

Iowa's Adult Literacy Benchmark

Background

Approximately 36-39% (N=800,000) of Iowa's adult population ages 16+ perform in the two lowest levels of literacy proficiency as documented by the Iowa State Adult Literacy Survey (IASALS) conducted in 1992. It was observed that adults who score in the two lowest levels of literacy proficiency do possess limited literacy skills. However, they are not likely to be able to perform the range of complex tasks that the National Education Goals Panel considers important for competing successfully in a global economy and fully exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. By the same token, approximately 61-65% (N= 1,287,000) of Iowa's adult population ages 16+ perform in the highest three levels of literacy proficiency as documented by the IASALS. The National Education Goals Panel considers adults functioning in the three highest levels of literacy proficiency as possessing the necessary skills to successfully complete in a global economy and fully exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

A key indicator of Iowa's adult literacy proficiency level is educational attainment. Recent research studies have concluded that attained level of education is the best overall predictor of adult literacy proficiency levels. A trend analysis of the Iowa 1940-1990 federal census data indicates that the percentage of adults age 18+ and lacking a high school diploma or its equivalency decreased from 67% in 1940 to 19% in 1990. The IASALS data further indicated that, by 1992, this figure had dropped to 17%. Therefore, a reasonable projection would forecast that the 2000 census data will indicate an additional drop of 2-3%. This projection would bring the percentage range to 10-12 percent. A benchmark goal of attaining an 85-90% Iowa adult proficiency level by the year 2010 is a realistic and attainable goal.

Benchmark Goal

The overall Iowa benchmark literacy goal states that by the year 2010, 85-90% of Iowa's adult population will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The attainment of this goal is contingent on continuing to provide adult literacy classes, offered through Iowa's community colleges and related agencies, to Iowa's adult literacy target populations. The ability to quantify the attainment of this goal is through: (1) the number of Iowa High School Equivalency Diplomas issued on an annual basis, (2) the number of basic skills literacy certificates issued on an annual basis, and (3) a replication of the IASALS study in 2010 with appropriate comparisons made to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) study.

Overview of State Level Benchmark Results

The results of Iowa's state level benchmarks are presented in Tables 1-3.

Table 1 presents a comparison of the percentage relationship among: (1) the negotiated benchmark levels, (2) the attained benchmark levels, and (3) the percentage points achieved above or below the negotiated benchmark levels. The results indicate that Iowa met **8 of the 11 educational functioning level benchmarks (72.7%)** and fell short on 3 of the 11 negotiated benchmarks (27.2%). The three educational functioning levels which did not meet the negotiated benchmarks were: (1) Beginning Literacy, (2) Low Advanced ESL, (3) High Advanced ESL.

Table 2 presents a comparison of the percentage relationship among: (1) the negotiated benchmark levels, (2) the attained benchmark levels for the core follow-up measures, and (3) the percentage points achieved above or below the negotiated benchmark levels. The results indicate that the **attained percentages exceeded the negotiated percentages by significant margins on two of the four follow-up measures.**

Table 3 displays the results for the number of basic skills certificates issued and the number of local programs participating for Program Years 1998 through 2001. The results indicate that the **benchmark has been successfully achieved within the projected time frame.**

Table 1

**Percentage Comparison of Iowa's Adult Basic Education Program
Performance Measures For NRS Core Indicator #1**

Core Indicator #1 [Educational Gain]: Demonstrated improvements in literacy skills in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, problem-solving, English language acquisition and other literacy skills.

Instructional Program	Educational Functioning Level	*Negotiated Percent	**Attained Percent	***Percent Above or Below Negotiated Benchmark
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Beginning Literacy	20	15	-5
	Beginning Basic Education ABE	22	29	+7
	Low Intermediate ABE	20	37	+17
	High Intermediate ABE	22	43	+21
English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)	Beginning Literacy ESL	26	68	+42
	Beginning ESL	24	46	+22
	Low Intermediate ESL	29	47	+18
	High Intermediate ESL	31	47	+16
	Low Advanced ESL	32	16	-16
	High Advanced ESL	32	31	-1
Adult Secondary Education (ASE)	Low Adult Secondary Education	32	73	+41

***Source:** *Iowa's State Plan for Adult Basic Education: Fiscal Years 2000-2004; Revised Table #12.* This column represents the negotiated percentage for the core indicators between the Iowa Department of Education and the United States Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (USDE:DAEL).

****Source:** Iowa's National Reporting System (NRS) report for Program Year 2001; Table 4B, column H. This column represents the percent of total enrollees who were pre/post accessed with pared scores and completed each educational functioning level.

******* The last column indicates the percentage points above or below the benchmark levels negotiated between the Iowa Department of Education and the United States Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (USDE: DAEL).

Table 2

Percentage Comparison of Iowa's Adult Basic Education Program Performance Measures for NRS Core Indicator #2

Core Indicator #2 [Follow-up Measures]: Placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment or career advancement.

Follow-up Measure	*Negotiated Percent	**Attained Percent	***Percent Above or Below Negotiated Benchmark
Entered Employment ¹	52	75	+23
Retained Employment ¹	77	71	-6
Obtained a GED or Adult Secondary School Diploma ²	42	51	+9
Entered Postsecondary Education or Training ³	14	10	-4

***Source:** *Iowa's State Plan for Adult Basic Education: Fiscal Years 2000-2004; Revised Table #12.* This column represents the negotiated percentage for the core indicators between the Iowa Department of Education and the United States Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (USDE:DAEL).

****Source:** Iowa's National Reporting System (NRS) report for Program Year 2001; Table 5, column G. This column represents the percent of adult basic education enrollees who achieved each follow-up measure.

*** The last column indicates the percentage points above or below the benchmark levels negotiated between the Iowa Department of Education and the United States Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (USDE: DAEL).

1. The percentage attained data reported for the follow-up measures of *Entered Employment and Retained Employment* were obtained as a result of a data match between the Iowa adult basic education electronic reporting system and the Iowa Workforce Development's base and benefits wage records for the period of July 1, 2000 through September 30, 2001 for the *Entered Employment* outcome measure and October 1, 2000 through September 30, 2001 for the *Retained Employment* outcome measure. This database is referenced as the Iowa Customer Tracking System.
2. The percentage attained data reported for the follow-up measure of *Obtained a GED or Adult Secondary School Diploma* were obtained as a result of a data match between the Iowa adult basic education electronic reporting system and the Iowa Department of Education's Iowa High School Equivalency Diploma database, Iowa's GED candidate data base at GEDScoring.COM and the number of Adult High School Diplomas issued.
3. The percent attained data reported for the follow-up measure of *Entered Postsecondary Education and Training* were obtained as a result of data matches between: (1) the Iowa adult basic education electronic reporting system and the Iowa Department of Education's Community College Management Information System for the first quarter of Program year 2002 (July 1, 2001-September 30, 2001), and (2) the Iowa adult basic education electronic reporting system and each community college's full time enrollment database.

Table 3

**Comparison of Iowa's Adult Basic Education Program
Performance Measures for State of Iowa Core Indicator #3**

Core Indicator #3 [Basic Skills Certificates]: A program designed to issue basic literacy skills certificates based on the attainment of demonstrated literacy competencies at pre-established levels. **The benchmark for Iowa's Basic Skills Certification Program was to have Iowa's 15 community colleges participating in the basic skill certification program by Program Year 2001.**

Fiscal Year	Number of Certificates Issued	Fiscal Year % Increase	No. of Community Colleges Participating
1998	323	--	4
1999	566	75	6
2000	1,591	182	12
2001	3,214	102	15
Total	5,694		

- Source(s):**
1. *Iowa's State Plan for Adult Basic Education: Fiscal Years 2000-2004, Section 5.3.1 (pp. 65-73).*
 2. *Iowa Basic Skills Certification Reports for Fiscal Years 1998-2001.*

Skill Level Gains

The data presented in Graphs 1 and 2 are designed to depict the percent of skill level gains achieved in the areas of mathematics and reading. The skill level gains strategy is designed to present another methodology for measuring educational gains. A skill level value ranging from 0-6 was assigned to each NRS/CASAS based educational functioning level for the Adult Basic Education and Adult Secondary Education instructional programs. For example, a skill level value of “2” was assigned to the educational functioning level titled *ABE Beginning Basic* which has a CASAS standard score range of 201-210.

The skill level gains graphs display the percent of the enrolled adult learners who advanced one or more skill levels from the skill level initially assigned as determined by pre-post assessment results. The graphs depict two skill level gain results for each skill level value: (1) the percent who advanced one or more skill levels from the assigned entry skill level and, (2) the percent who advanced two or more skill levels from the assigned entry skill level. For example, Graph 1 displays two percentage bars for the skill level value of “2”: (1) 27.39% of the learners initially assigned a skill level value “2” in mathematics advanced one or more skill levels, and (2) 11.28% of the learners initially assigned a skill level value of “2” in mathematics advanced two or more skill levels. Therefore, a total of 38.67% of the learners initially assigned a skill level value of “2” in mathematics made skill level advancements.

Graph 1 depicts the skill level gains in the area of mathematics. The results are as follows:

- The greatest skill level gain (48.64%), for those learners who advanced **one or more levels**, was at skill level “5” which is the educational functioning level titled “ASE Low”;
- The second greatest skill level gain (27.39%), for those learners who advanced **one or more skill levels**, was at skill level “2” which is the educational functioning level titled “ABE Beginning Intermediate”;
- The greatest skill level gain (11.28%), for those learners who advanced **two or more skill levels**, was at skill level “2” which is the educational functioning level titled “ABE Beginning Intermediate”;
- The second greatest skill level gain (10.41%), for those learners who advanced **two or more skill levels**, was at skill level “4” which is the educational functioning level titled “ABE Intermediate High”;
- The average skill level gain across all skill level values for those learners who advanced one or more skill levels was **29.38%**;
- The average skill level gain across all skill levels for those learners who advanced two or more skill levels was **7.64%**.

Graph 2 depicts the skill level gains in the area of reading. The results are as follows:

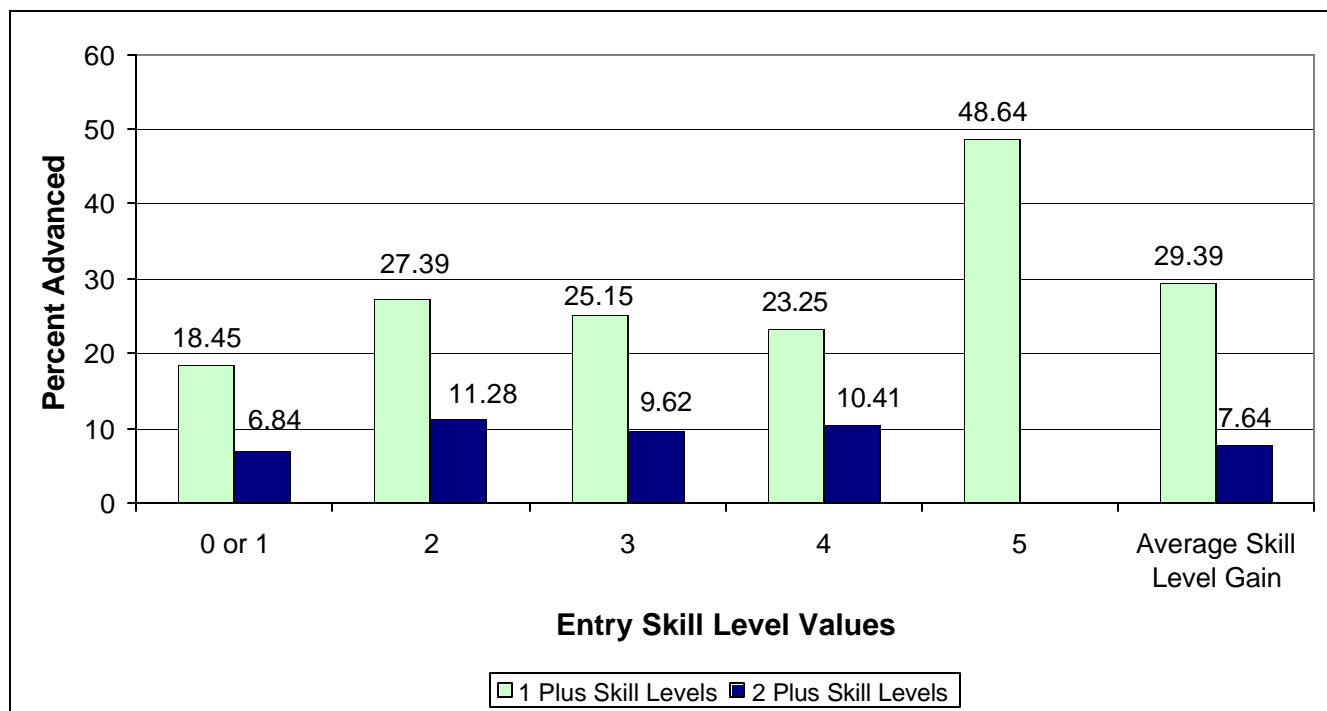
- The greatest skill level gain (36.10%), for those learners who advanced **one or more levels**, was at skill level “5” which is the educational functioning level titled “ASE Low”;
- The second greatest skill level gain (26.34%), for those learners who advanced **one or more skill levels**, was at skill level “3” which is the educational functioning level titled “ABE Intermediate Low”;
- The greatest skill level gain (7.89%), for those learners who advanced **two or more skill levels**, was at skill level “2” which is the educational functioning level titled “ABE Beginning Intermediate”;
- The second greatest skill level gain (7.30%), for those learners who advanced **two or more skill levels**, was at skill level “4” which is the educational functioning level titled “ABE Intermediate High”;
- The average skill level gain across all skill level values for those learners who advanced one or more skill levels was **27.15%**;
- The average skill level gain across all skill levels for those learners who advanced two or more skill levels was **4.05%**.

The following observations were extrapolated from the data presented in Graphs 1 and 2:

- There were substantial skill level gains made at **all skill levels** in the areas of reading and mathematics;
- The greatest percentage increase in skill level gains were observed at the advanced levels (i.e. skill level value “5”);
- The average percent skill level gain across all skill levels for those learners who advanced one or more skill levels was virtually the same for reading (27.15%) and mathematics (29.38%).

GRAPH 1

Adult Basic Education Program Percentage Skill Level Gains for Mathematics

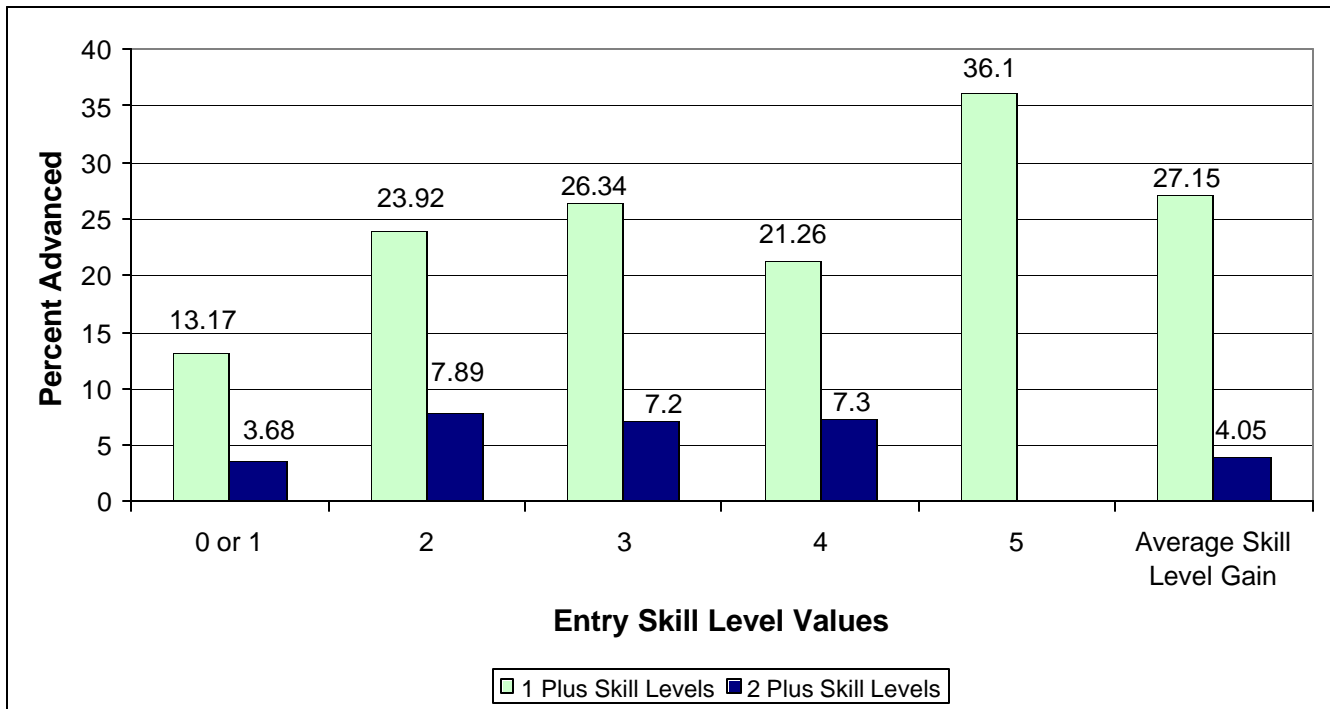


CASAS Entry Levels	CASAS Standard Score Ranges	Educational Functioning Levels	Skill Level Value	Number At Entry Skill Level	Number Advanced 1 or More Skill Levels	Number Advanced 2 or More Skills Levels
A	Under 200	ABE Beginning Literacy	0 or 1	775	143	53
B	201-210	ABE Beginning Basic	2	869	238	98
B	211-220	ABE Intermediate Low	3	1777	447	171
C	221-235	ABE Intermediate High	4	2873	668	299
D	236-245	ASE Low	5	1836	893	n/a
Total				8130	2389	621

Source: State Aggregated Report for Program Year 2001

GRAPH 2

Adult Basic Education Program Percentage Skill Level Gains for Reading



CASAS Entry Levels	CASAS Standard Score Ranges	Educational Functioning Levels	Skill Level Value	Number At Entry Skill Level	Number Advanced 1 or More Skill Levels	Number Advanced 2 or More Skills Levels
A	Under 200	ABE Beginning Literacy	0 or 1	706	93	26
B	201-210	ABE Beginning Basic	2	393	94	31
B	211-220	ABE Intermediate Low	3	805	212	58
C	221-235	ABE Intermediate High	4	2700	574	197
D	236-245	ASE Low	5	3091	1116	n/a
Total				7695	2089	312

Source: State Aggregated Report for Program Year 2001

SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

The purpose of this section is to summarize the benchmark results for Program Year 2001 and to provide observations which can serve as the basis for program improvement. The following observations provide a summary of benchmark attainment:

- **Educational Gains Core Indicator** - An analysis of benchmark attainment indicates that **8 of the 11 educational functioning level benchmarks met or exceeded the negotiated benchmarks (72.7%)** and **3 of the 11 benchmarks fell short of the negotiated benchmarks (27.2%)**. The three educational functioning levels which did not meet the negotiated benchmarks were: (1) Beginning Literacy, (2) Low Advanced ESL, (3) High Advanced ESL.
- **Follow-up Measure Core Indicator** - An analysis of benchmark attainment indicates that **2 of the 4 follow-up measure benchmarks met or exceeded the negotiated benchmarks (50%)**. The follow-up measures which did not meet the negotiated benchmarks were "Retained Employment" and "Entered Postsecondary Education or Training".
- **Iowa's Basic Skills Certification Program Core Indicator** - An analysis of benchmark attainment indicates that the **time frame for all community colleges to fully implement the Iowa Basic Skills Certification Program was successfully achieved**. The established benchmark time frame was to have all of Iowa's community colleges initiate the certification program by Program Year 2001.
- **Overall Benchmark Attainment** - During Program Year 2001, Iowa's statewide Adult Basic Education Program **met or exceeded 11 of the 16 benchmark levels (68%)**.
- **Skill Level Gains** - Skill level gains were achieved at all educational functioning levels. The highest percentage skill level gains were observed at the advanced educational functioning levels.

The major benchmark accomplishments were:

- Iowa's statewide Adult Basic Education Program met or exceeded 11 of the 16 benchmark levels **(68% attainment)**;
- The average skill level gain across all skill level values for those learners who advanced one or more skill levels in mathematics was **29%**;
- The average skill level gain across all skill level values for those learners who advanced two or more skill levels in mathematics was **8%**;
- The average skill level gain across all skill level values for those learners who advanced one or more skill levels in reading was **27%**;
- The average skill level gain across all skill level values for those learners who advanced two or more skill levels in reading was **4%**;
- There were substantial skill level gains made at **all skill levels** in the area of reading and mathematics;
- **75%** of the enrollees who indicated their program goal was to obtain employment achieved that objective;

- **71%** of the enrollees who indicated their program goal was to retain employment achieved that objective;
- **51%** of the enrollees who indicated their program goal was to obtain a GED or adult secondary school diploma achieved that objective;
- **10%** of the enrollees who indicated their program goal was to enter postsecondary education or training achieved that objective.

Program Year 2001 was the first year that Iowa's statewide ABE program has reported benchmarks based on aggregated state data which met all of the NRS criteria. The main areas of focus for benchmark improvement during Program Year 2002 (July 1, 2001 - June 30, 2002) are: (1) low level literacy educational functioning levels, (2) ESL programs, (3) entry into postsecondary education and training. The areas in which the benchmarks were successfully attained by the majority of the local program providers were: (1) advanced ABE and ASE educational functioning levels, (2) entered employment and GED diploma attainment.

In summary, this report provides base line benchmark data against which succeeding program year's benchmark data can be evaluated. The benchmark data can serve as the basis for local and state program improvement for Program Year 2002. **The overall goal for benchmark improvement for Program Year 2002 is to increase benchmark attainment from 68% to 90%.**