Congrats to FY16-17 Programs of Excellence!

Program: Boone
Director: Peg Russell

Program: Breckinridge
Director: Jackie Robertson

Programs: Carter, Greenup
Director: Tessa Love

Program: Christian
Director: Gary Dawson

Program: Franklin
Director: Rita Rector

Program: Hardin
Director: Diane Kelley

Program: LaRue
Director: Connie Goff

Program: Lyon
Director: Susan Jackson

Program: Marion
Director: Mike Abell

Program: Meade
Director: Dianne Bratcher

Program: Simpson
Director: Brian Becker

On December 7, 2017, during the Program Directors Institute (PDI) in Lexington, KY, KYAE Skills U Programs of Excellence for fiscal year 2016-17 were awarded banners. Directors are shown with Reecie Stagnolia and Cody Davidson. (For retirees who were recognized, see page 2.)
KYAE Skills U Lesson Bank features many updates, improvements

By Leta Ann Martin
Morehead State University Adult Education Academy

Since the launch of the new fiscal year on July 1, 2017, many updates and improvements have been made to the KYAE Skills U Lesson Bank. Morehead State University Adult Education Academy and KYAE Skills U staff have worked diligently to make continuous improvements to the Lesson Bank to provide a high quality, comprehensive resource for all of our KYAE Skills U educators, as well as educators throughout the United States.

In fact, KYAE Skills U Lesson bank was featured in a selection of resources for LINCS (Literacy Information and Communication System). We are honored and proud that lessons created by KYAE Skills U educators are being used to teach not only Kentucky’s adult education students, but students across our nation.

Since the beginning of this fiscal year, the following have been added to the Lesson Bank:

• “Grab and Go” lessons. This is an option to print out a more streamlined version of the lesson. These are generally 2-3 pages and are great for educators to access quickly. The original format for developing the more detailed lesson plans will remain as a means for assisting new instructors, who would benefit from a deeper understanding of andragogy, the CCRS, and contextualizing instruction for workforce readiness through the integration of the KYAE Skills U Employability Standards.

  • A Student Retention and Persistence lesson category. In this category, we have collaborated with seasoned content experts to create lessons that will help to guide educators to help teach students motivation, thus promoting persistence to reach their goals.

  • Career Exploration, Soft Skills and KY’s Top 5 Career Sectors lessons. These contextualized lessons—including those specifically for Healthcare and Constructions and Trade sectors—help ensure educators have materials they need to integrate academic and workforce-related skills.

  • RLA and math crosswalks. These connect lessons to GED® High Impact Indicators.

  • At-a-glance lesson lists for RLA, math, career exploration, soft skills, Kentucky’s top five career sectors, and student retention and persistence. These lists assist users in quickly identifying lessons aligned with student needs.

Lesson Bank changes and improvements are ever-evolving. KYAE Skills U and Adult Education Academy make every effort to maintain this high-quality resource and always welcome your feedback for additional resources to feature.

Simpson program largely attributes success to community partnerships

The Simpson County Adult Education Skills U program was ranked number one in the KYAE Skills U Top 25 for FY16-17 and is on its way to being eligible for a performance funding bump in both the areas of GED® and MSG goal attainment for FY17-18 (see “Data Dive,” p. 4).

Ray Haddix, coordinator, says that the program has “benefitted tremendously” from its numerous community partnerships with both community-based and business entities. These partners include: Toyo Automotive, Harman Industries, Simpson County Detention Center, ResCare, Simpson County School District, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Simpson County Community Education, the local public library and Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (the program's fiscal agent).

Ray says, “These hard-working partners either send us students or provide services that help each student meet academic and/or employment goals.”

Additionally, Ray says they recently committed to becoming an affiliate for the South Central Workforce Development Network of Workforce Services, which will provide a physical location where community members may access job opportunities and workforce services.

Three retiring program directors were honored for their years of service during the PDI. You’ll be missed, Cris, JoEllen and Penny!

Cris Crowley
Programs: Hopkins, Muhlenberg

JoEllen Mitchell
Program: Pendleton

Penny Qualls
Program: Boyd
Early GED Ready® testing and peer study groups reap benefits

In each issue of News to Use, we will be sharing a “Best Practice Alert” – something that a local program is doing that can be replicated in other programs.

This issue’s Best Practice Alert comes to us from Nathaniel Haines, assistant director of the Skills U program in Harlan County, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College. Nathaniel’s director, Travis Cox, alerted us to the success that the Harlan program was experiencing.

As you read about the best practice, you will note that **replicable actions are on the left in green** and are accompanied by specific, supporting information and anecdotes to the right.

In the first quarter of the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the Harlan County Skills U program had three GED® graduates. In October and November, they nearly quadrupled this number; Harlan County had 11 GED® graduates during that time.

What is the cause for the boost in GED® graduate results?

Nathaniel attributes these results to administering the GED Ready® Test earlier in the instructional process. He says that Harlan County staff had previously been administering a student’s first GED Ready® Test after six weeks of study.

They decided to try something new … Any student who TABE tests at a level 4 in a subject area then immediately takes a GED Ready® Test in the qualifying subject area(s). Nathaniel says that they have been seeing positive GED Ready® Test results, which allows a student either to go ahead and take the corresponding GED® module or to hone in more specifically on the topics on which they need to work.

If a student requires more study, Nathaniel says that studying KET’s Fast Forward online coursework in the targeted areas of need “seems to really help.”

Nathaniel says that having a one-on-one discussion with a student about their TABE results is crucial to connecting with the student and getting their buy-in on taking the GED Ready® Test. While he says some students are uncomfortable with the prospect of taking the GED Ready® Test right after taking the TABE assessment, he says that most students “get excited” once it is explained to them how taking the test early on can help them prepare for the GED® test better (and likely complete the GED® test more quickly). (Nathaniel says that students who express discomfort “get a couple of weeks of instruction under their belts” before taking the GED Ready® Test.)

Nathaniel says that connecting with students one-on-one fosters the building of a partnership with the students, one in which students establish their own goals and take ownership for their own learning and success.

One way in which Harlan County students are taking ownership for their own learning and success is through student-led note review sessions. These sessions, which occur before or after class, provide students the opportunity to gather and go over the previous days’ notes. These sessions are particularly helpful for students who have to miss class, but Nathaniel notes that they are helpful for all students.

“They show each other how to do the work,” Nathaniel says. “It’s something we’ve been doing for a while, and students are taking more ownership.”

Are you doing something in your program that is working well? Others need to hear about it so that it may benefit their programs!

Contact Missy Brownson Ross at missy.ross@ky.gov or 502-892-3014 to share.

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**Early GED Ready® testing and peer study groups reap benefits**

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2018 GED® science test to feature big change

Beginning in 2018, the GED® science test will not include short answer items. Different item types will be used to measure the skills that were assessed by the short answer responses.

The science test will remain the same length and have the same number of score points.

In announcing this change, GED Testing Service® indicated it would provide additional flexibility in choosing the item types that produce the best measurement results.

Local program hosts “Workforce Thursdays” to connect students to services

By Vonda Jennings, program director
Butler County Adult Education Skills U

At the Butler County Adult Education Skills U Center in Mangontown, we have tried to coordinate our service providers and have started having WORKFORCE THURSDAYS! This makes it so much easier for each of our partners and stakeholders to coordinate services.

On Workforce Thursdays, representatives from Kentucky Career Center, Vocational Rehab, employment services and Housing Authority are available on site to assist. We now have two dedicated workstations for community services, such as applying for housing, résumé building and job searches.

The job search engine and listings are updated weekly from a local level and a regional level.

In late October, the center partnered with People Plus Staffing to host our first-ever “Meet and Greet” event to allow all of our partners to see each other and enjoy a fall cookout. This event was a huge success.

Everyone got to learn about the services provided and match up with friendly faces they know they can call on to support and strengthen the workforce for Butler County.

In addition to the Butler County Skills U staff, those in attendance at the first Workforce Thursday event were: Robert Boone, CEO, South Central Kentucky Workforce Development Board; David Fields, Butler County judge executive; Chad and Leslie Cardwell and staff, Andrea’s Mission; Anita Jenkins and staff, Housing Authority; Sarah Lewis, Positive Directions; Connie Tribble, ResCare; Teresa Montgomery and staff, Delta Faucet Kentucky; Daniel Ward and Hannah Southerland, counselors, Butler County High School; Scott Howard, superintendent, Butler County Schools; Donna Annis, curriculum coordinator, Butler County Schools; and staff, People Plus Staffing agency.

We are looking forward to working together to build a great workforce!

Butler County Adult Education Skills U partnered with People Plus Staffing to host a “Meet and Greet” to allow partners to connect and enjoy a cookout.

Data Dive

Taking a deeper look at data

350+ just need one section to pass

As of January 2, 2018, KAERS indicated that there are 722 KYAE Skills U students who have passed all sections of the GED Ready® test but have not passed the GED® test. Included in this number are 359 students who need to pass just one more GED® module to earn GED® diplomas. There are 122 students who need to pass two more GED® modules to complete the test, and 55 who need to pass three to complete. All together, there are 536 students who have successfully completed a portion of the GED® test.

There are currently 1477 GED® graduates in Kentucky; an additional 722 would increase this number by nearly 50%. To determine the individuals in your program who are among this population, you may run the KAERS Admin Report called “TABE GED Ready and GED Report.”

Programs eligible for funding bump

Below are listed programs that met the 50% goal in either GED® graduates or Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) by December 31, 2017. If they meet their full goal by the end of FY17-18, they will receive a 0.5% bump in performance funding.

**MSG Goal:** Boone, Caldwell, Campbell, Carroll, Carter, Casey, Christian, Edmonson, Grayson, Greenup, Hardin, LaRue, Lawrence, Logan, Lyon, Marion, Mason, Meade, Montgomery, Rowan, Russell, Shelby, Simpson, Taylor, Union, Warren, Washington.

**GED® Goal:** Breckinridge, Caldwell, Calloway, Campbell, Carroll, Casey, Christian, Crittenden, Daviess, Franklin, Gallatin, Grayson, Hardin, Jessamine, LaRue, Lyon, Marion, Martin, Mason, Menifee, Mercer, Rowan, Scott, Simpson, Spencer.
Local program collaborates with newspaper to run student success series

When Tina Cook became director of the Laurel County Adult Education Skills U program, she set up a meeting with the editor of the local paper, who, like her, was new in his role after many years of working in his field.

“I asked what his vision of the paper was, and he said he wanted more ‘feel good’ stories on his front page than arrests,” Tina says. “When he published the story of me taking over as director, I also sent a thank you note to build rapport. That was the ground work …”

Through discussions Tina had with staff, it was suggested that “the paper should run a whole series.” Staff member Erin Moses, who handles much of the program’s in-house marketing, contacted the editor with a pitch for a series of student success stories, which would help the editor meet his goals of having more ‘feel good’ stories while helping the program get the word out about all of the great things happening there.

Tina says that she and Erin selected graduates to feature that met specific criteria and had faced obstacles on their path to success. “We selected the older graduate, the AOKY graduate, the graduate with two autistic children, the dyslexic graduate, the guy who lost his job because of no GED then regained it on completion,” she says. “We wanted the ongoing theme to be overcoming adversity and/or hectic family life to accomplish their GED goal and send the message of, ‘if these folks can do it, you can, too.’”

Each graduate they selected was contacted personally about the series and asked if they would be interested in participating – and all of them said yes. From there, they turned the students’ contact information and best times to call over to the reporter.

“After that, we were in the dark and waited to see what happened,” Tina says. The first story ran, but it had no program contact information at the end. Erin contacted the paper to see if they would run the contact information on the next story, and she found out the stories were going to be a series that ran every Friday. The second story ran, but once again, there was no contact information. For the next story, the program ran an ad beside the article promoting their “4 for 4” initiative (four test preps and testing fee covered). The next story featured their contact information, and the last two stories in the series provided the contact information not only for Laurel County, but for Knox and Whitley counties as well.

“Our students are very proud to tell their stories,” Tina says. “They have a heartfelt, genuine message to give and are honored to have a public platform to give it.” While Tina and Erin tried to help provide students with a focus for their message, they knew that much of it was out of their hands. “What we learned is to trust our program and the work we have done year after year to tell the story of how we changed these people’s lives and trust the folks to tell it,” she says.

“That brings me to the next lesson of accepting that we can’t control what goes out when it is between the graduate and the reporter, so if other programs want to do this, they must really trust their work,” Tina says. “The only words of wisdom I have are to be willing to let the student tell their message and accept that the story isn’t about them or their program. We pitched ‘GED Awareness,’ the paper ran it as ‘Nontraditional Success.’ It was nice to have our contact info at the end, but the stories were about each person’s personal struggle, not us tooting the horn about how great our program is. Any story that is a veiled advertisement isn’t what we were going for.”

“We were going for the bigger picture of letting people know it is something they can accomplish,” Tina says. “We gave our ‘power’ away to let their own stories unfold. I think they turned out beautifully.”