



## Texas Workforce Investment Council

# *Policy News Highlights*

Issue 20, Quarter 4, December 2012

*Policy News Highlights* is a quarterly review of selected reports relevant to the policy and research functions of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Federal and state agency websites, in addition to numerous public policy and educational databases, are scanned monthly for relevant and emerging issues. Reports are catalogued and stored electronically in the Council's Information Repository (IR).

The IR is divided into 12 topic areas that correspond to priority issues supporting the Council's current strategic plan. They are: adult education, apprenticeship, career and college readiness, career and technical education, clusters and sector strategies, competitiveness, data, disabilities, dropout prevention, green initiatives, supply-demand, and training. Not every topic area is addressed each quarter.

*Policy News Highlights* is organized as an annotated bibliography with short summaries of recent articles grouped according to their topic area.

### Adult Education

***The Public Workforce System: Serving Older Job Seekers and the Disability Implications of an Aging Workforce***, National Technical Assistance and Research Center to Promote Leadership for Increasing the Employment and Economic Independence of Adults with Disabilities, May 2012

This report considers a complex set of issues pertaining to aging, disability, and employment. Older workers are not a homogenous group. They span an array of ages, from 40-somethings to seniors in their 80s, and work in many different industries. Subsequently, this report identifies the challenges that older workers face, describes how the U.S. public workforce system serves these individuals, and makes policy, program, and research recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of the U.S. public workforce system in serving this population.

[http://www.ntarcenter.org/sites/default/files/NTAR\\_Public\\_Workforce\\_System\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ntarcenter.org/sites/default/files/NTAR_Public_Workforce_System_Report.pdf)

***Texas Interagency Literacy Council Report***, Texas Workforce Commission, November 2012

Texas' current adult education system is fragmented among state agencies, nonprofit and volunteer organizations, and employers. This report includes the identification of barriers to improving literacy and recommendations for coordinating and leveraging existing and potential resources to extend adult education services to a greater number of Texans and to improve the Texas workforce.

Recommendations include maintaining information about providers, developing career pathways, increasing education and training completion rates, and supporting system improvements and expanded use of technology in training.

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/adultlit/interagency-literacy-report.pdf>

***Graduation Data Shows States Struggle with English Learners***, *Governing*, December 2012

This article highlights states' effectiveness in meeting the needs of English language learners. It presents the standardized, state-by-state 4-year graduation rate data released by the U.S. Department of Education. While half of the states graduated at least 80 percent of their students, the numbers also demonstrated that states are struggling with English language learners. The figures imply that public education systems might not be meeting the needs of minority populations, in particular the Hispanic population that continues to grow. The Education Department suggests that the disparity across states shows that policies within states could have an influence on whether English language learners succeed. <http://www.governing.com/blogs/view/gov-graduation-data-shows-states-struggle-with-English-learners.html>

***Transitioning Adults to Opportunity: Policy to Performance Toolkit***, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, November 2012

This toolkit provides state adult education staff and stakeholders with guidance and tools to use in developing, implementing, and monitoring state policies and their associated practices that support an effective state adult basic education (ABE) to postsecondary education and training system. [http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/Toolkit\\_final\\_November2012.pdf](http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/Toolkit_final_November2012.pdf)

## Apprenticeship

***Collaboration with Workforce System and Education Creates Skilled Applicant Pool for Pacific Gas & Electric Company***, *Corporate Voices*

To address the shortage of skilled applicants and the acceleration of incumbent skilled workers retiring, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) developed a partnership with local workforce investment boards and community colleges to cultivate career pathways to increase community access and employee progression into new energy jobs. The PowerPathway™ program creates a readily available, skilled, and diverse workforce for PG&E, which sees new hires from the program advance, on average, 6 months ahead of their peers. This decrease in a worker's time-to-productivity produces a return on investment of over 3-to-1 while the program model serves not only the company but also the broader community. [http://www.corporatevoices.org/system/files/u822/PG\\_E.pdf](http://www.corporatevoices.org/system/files/u822/PG_E.pdf)

## Career and College Readiness

***Transfer: An Indispensable Part of the Community College Mission***, American Association of Community Colleges, October 2012

This brief examines student transfer as a core function of community colleges, the role of transfer as a pathway to a bachelor's degree, the mobility of credits between institutions, and current and future challenges associated with transfer. It cites research that shows higher student success when institutions support transfer and accept all or some community college credits. Given the current emphasis on graduation as the measure of institutional effectiveness, transfer becomes more critical to ensuring and replicating program success when students take nonlinear and increasingly complex paths to educational attainment.

[http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Documents/AACC\\_Transfer\\_to\\_LUMINA.pdf](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Documents/AACC_Transfer_to_LUMINA.pdf)

***Portable, Stackable Credentials: A New Education Model for Industry-Specific Career Pathways,***

McGraw Hill Research Foundation, November 2012

As the world's labor markets evolve, so too do demands on educational systems. This paper describes the challenges ahead and highlights current innovations and models—around the world and in the U.S.—that suggest how a new system of well-designed career pathways could more effectively address the needs of employers, as well as the needs of individual workers. At the core of such a system are portable and stackable credentials that enable students of all ages to both learn and earn by acquiring shorter-term credentials with clear labor market value, even as workers continue to build on these credentials to access more advanced jobs and higher wages.

[http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/PortableStackableCreds-112812\\_0.pdf](http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/PortableStackableCreds-112812_0.pdf)

***Record Shares of Young Adults Have Finished Both High School and College,*** Pew Research, November 2012

This analysis of newly available census data found that record shares (33 percent) of young adults are completing high school, going to college, and finishing college. In 2012, for the first time ever, one-third of the nation's 25- to 29-year-olds have completed at least a bachelor's degree. College completion is now at record levels among key demographic groups: men and women; blacks, whites, and Hispanics; and foreign-born and native-born Americans. However, other advanced economies are registering similar or greater gains. A survey of more than 1,000 college presidents nationwide revealed concerns about the quality, preparedness, and study habits of today's college students.

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/11/05/record-shares-of-young-adults-have-finished-both-high-school-and-college/>

***The Role of Language and Literacy in College- and Career-Ready Standards: Rethinking Policy and Practice in Support of English Language Learners,*** Alliance for Excellent Education, October 2012

By 2020, more than half of all public school students in the nation will likely have a non-English-speaking background. Yet, English is embedded throughout all college- and career-ready standards. In order to meet these standards, the growing proportion of students who are English language learners (ELLs) must possess and be able to demonstrate an understanding of both the subject matter being considered and the English language. This policy brief describes the implementation of the new standards, with a focus on the implications for ELLs. It discusses the challenges of language acquisition and the importance to learners of connecting language proficiency to rigorous content standards. Initiatives that examine the language demands embedded in the new standards are highlighted. Changes needed at the secondary school level and recommendations for state and local policymakers are also included.

<http://www.all4ed.org/files/LangAndLiteracyInStandardsELLs.pdf>

***Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education: A Joint Statement,*** Complete College America, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Education Commission of the States, and Jobs for the Future, December 2012

Stating that “remedial education as commonly designed and implemented does not work,” several leading national higher education groups have called for immediate transformation of current approaches. Citing groundbreaking research on the causes of failure and proven successful practices, Complete College America, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, Education Commission of the States, and Jobs for the Future jointly established Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education to urgently drive large-scale change across states and higher education institutions. The organizations sum up their joint statement with a call for urgent action to transform remediation.

[http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Remediation\\_Joint\\_Statement-Embargo.pdf](http://www.completecollege.org/docs/Remediation_Joint_Statement-Embargo.pdf)

***Youth and Work: Restoring Teen and Young Adult Connections to Opportunity*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012**

This policy report finds that nearly 6.5 million U.S. teens and young adults are neither in school nor in the workforce. The concern is that a generation will grow up with little early work experience, missing the chance to build knowledge and the job-readiness skills that come from holding part-time and entry-level jobs. Here, young people out of school and out of work are described as disconnected youth. The report looks at this population by age, race, and income and includes a state-by-state comparison. In addition to providing new national and state data on the issue, the report describes the scale of the challenge and offers recommendations to ensure youth have the academic and technical skills to hold a job, launch a career, and gain a stronger position in the economy.

<http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/Y/youthandworkpolicyreport/kidscountyouthandwork.pdf>

## Career and Technical Education

***Research Snapshot: Authentic Literacy Applications in CTE: Helping All Students Learn***, National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, May 2012

Career and technical education (CTE) classrooms require students to read highly technical and diverse texts. CTE students often favor hands-on learning and show opposition to reading, while many CTE teachers lack the skills and experience required to successfully implement strategies to improve literacy. This research brief highlights a study of students enrolled in CTE courses that was conducted to determine the impact of disciplinary literacy strategies on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and motivation to read. Findings indicated that reading strategy instruction produced a statistically significant impact on reading comprehension and vocabulary learning.

[http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/authentic\\_literacy.pdf](http://www.nrccte.org/sites/default/files/publication-files/authentic_literacy.pdf)

## Competitiveness

***Help Wanted 2012: Addressing the Skills Gap***, Institute for a Competitive Workforce, September 2012

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce has released a report that shares the views of several top education and business leaders regarding their perceived deficiencies in current and future talent pools and outlines their vision of what it will take for the United States to regain its status of having the most skilled workforce in the world. The leaders discuss their ideas on what needs to be changed in our education and workforce development systems, and how they are prepared to work with local and national leaders to get the job done.

<http://icw.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/HelpWanted%202012.pdf>

***A National Talent Strategy: Ideas for Securing U.S. Competitiveness and Economic Growth***, Microsoft Corporation, September 2012

Microsoft Corporation released a report that includes specific ideas and recommendations to address the threats to employment and economic competitiveness the U.S. faces. The report's recommendations focus on two areas: 1) strengthening the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) pipeline of skilled and educated workers so that the country can meet projected workforce needs with American citizens; and, 2) targeted changes to the immigration process of highly skilled foreign nationals that will both bridge the short-term skills gap and help fund some of the investments made to strengthen the STEM pipeline. Goals are outlined for these two areas; recommendations for meeting each goal are included. The report focuses on computer science to prepare students for STEM and related occupations.

<http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/news/download/presskits/citizenship/MSNTS.pdf>

***Summary Findings of the Aspen Seminar on Policy Priorities for Manufacturing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***, The Aspen Institute, October 2012

Policy priorities of high-level leaders of manufacturing firms and associated member organizations are summarized in this report following consideration of alternative resolutions and best approaches at a seminar in Aspen. Human capital continues to surface among key challenges associated with trade policy, energy, tax, regulation, and tort environment. These manufacturing leaders emphasize the need for improvements in STEM education at all levels. They also recommend providing a more welcoming environment to attract and retain foreign-born talent to meet the needs for a skilled factory-floor workforce in the manufacturing sector. Such a workforce will require higher skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving than ever before, as well as innovative and globally competitive science and engineering workforce members doing research in areas key to technological advancement in manufacturing.

[http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/MFG\\_2012\\_Summary\\_Findings.pdf](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/MFG_2012_Summary_Findings.pdf)

***National & Regional Workforce Solutions: New Industry-Higher Education Projects for the NexGen U.S. Workforce***, Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF), June 2012

Launched to guide industry higher education partnerships toward a focus on unique regional workforce needs, this strategy for undergraduate partnerships and regional workforce projects engages BHEF members to meet America's workforce and education challenges. Each regional project showcases the commitment of local businesses and higher education institutions to confront critical workforce challenges in their regions. By strategically connecting companies' core competencies with undergraduate education, the goal is to increase the persistence of students, particularly women and underrepresented minorities, toward completing degrees and pursuing careers in high-demand areas, such as cybersecurity, big-data, life sciences, water, energy, engineering, and entrepreneurship.

[http://www.bhef.com/solutions/documents/BHEF-National-and-Regional-Workforce-Projects\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.bhef.com/solutions/documents/BHEF-National-and-Regional-Workforce-Projects_Booklet.pdf)

## Data

***California's Older Workforce Untapped Value for Today's Businesses***, California Employment Development Department, November 2012

The revival of the nation's economy has been hampered by the lack of employment opportunities for workers displaced as a result of the 2008 recession. Negative perceptions coupled with a tight job market have made the challenge of finding work increasingly difficult for one segment of our nation's

workforce in particular: older workers. Local employment dynamics data can be used to inform workforce development agencies and job seekers about the employment trends associated with this valuable segment of the workforce. This presentation also offers benefits of employing older workers and innovative retention strategies.

[http://lmiontheweb.org/lmipub/Californias\\_Older\\_Workforce\\_Untapped\\_Value\\_for\\_Todays\\_Businesses\\_Final.pdf](http://lmiontheweb.org/lmipub/Californias_Older_Workforce_Untapped_Value_for_Todays_Businesses_Final.pdf)

**NEW ANALYSIS: Data for Action 2012: Focus on People to Change Data Culture**, Data Quality Campaign, November 2012

Education stakeholders, from students and parents to administrators and policymakers, require data beyond test scores to make informed decisions. This new report reveals state-by-state progress in supporting effective use of data. Although states collect quality data and have enacted policy changes that lay the foundation to link pre-Kindergarten through post-secondary/workforce data systems, they lack governance structures with the authority necessary to share appropriate and limited critical data. States are developing reports and dashboards; however, they are not effectively providing access to parents and other stakeholders, or training to educators, in using the data. These deficiencies impede efforts to provide stakeholders with the information necessary to ensure that students stay on track for success in college and careers. The report also includes key findings and examples from leading states.

<http://dataqualitycampaign.org/files/DFA2012%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

## Disabilities

**College Students with Disabilities: What Factors Influence Degree Completion**, John Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Edward Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy, Rutgers University, and the Kessler Foundation, September 2012

This report examines the experiences of students with disabilities who successfully completed college and the staff from five colleges and universities in New Jersey to determine what factors were effective in supporting completion of degrees by students with disabilities. The findings offer observations about students with disabilities, challenges, and promising practices of postsecondary institutions. The report also highlights areas for further study and development of supports for students, staff, and faculty.

[http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/College\\_Students\\_Disabilities\\_Report.pdf](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/College_Students_Disabilities_Report.pdf)

**Community College Efforts to Prepare Special Populations for the Workforce: Older Workers, Dislocated Workers and Students with Disabilities**, League for Innovations in the Community College Conference, March 2012

This presentation offers insight into community college efforts to serve older workers, dislocated workers, and students with disabilities. The studies presented consider the challenges encountered when trying to identify disabilities in older students who did not go through the education system under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Presenters examine the unique needs of students who have been out of school for an extended period of time and who also require job transition assistance. Researchers worked with community colleges that enroll high numbers of such students to determine best methods for addressing their unique needs.

[http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/Community\\_College\\_Efforts\\_to\\_Prepare\\_Special\\_Populations.pdf](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/Community_College_Efforts_to_Prepare_Special_Populations.pdf)

***Employment for People with Disabilities, A Pathways Policy Brief***, American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), September 2012

This policy brief is one of a series from APHSA addressing specific policies and recommendations that support the four outcome impact areas identified under APHSA members' Pathways initiative. Employment enables individuals with disabilities to participate in community life, earn income, reduce dependence on public benefits, and contribute to their communities and the economy. This brief emphasizes person-centered, integrated, and outcome-focused solutions that support gainful employment and independence for people with disabilities.

<http://www.aphsa.org/Policy/Doc/Disabilities-Policy-Brief.pdf>

***Policy Research Brief: A Review of Commonly Used State Employment Measures in Intellectual and Developmental Disability Services***, Research and Training Center on Community Living, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, December 2012

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are underrepresented in the general workforce. This policy brief highlights renewed focus on improving their employment outcomes. It describes some of the distinctions between four data sets available to the public that are commonly used to assess the current employment situation for this population, and ways to improve policies and services. This brief also offers a state-by-state summary and cross-state comparison of these commonly used measures, and discusses considerations for their use in policy, practice, and research.

<http://ici.umn.edu/products/prb/221/221.pdf>

## Training

***Workforce Development Training Fund: An Assessment***, Idaho Department of Labor, October 2012

This report provides a detailed analysis of each company involved in the study and the impact that training, financed by the fund, had on participating workers' wages, job retention, and possibility of partial or permanent business cycle-associated layoff.

[http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/WDTF\\_Evaluation.pdf](http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/WDTF_Evaluation.pdf)

***College Credit for Heroes***, Texas Workforce Commission, 2012

The College Credit for Heroes program was established to create a statewide system that ensures all student veterans and service members are awarded college credit in Texas' state colleges and universities for military trainings, education, and experience to enable them to efficiently transition from the military into the civilian workforce. This report presents the implementation results of grants awarded; best practices; measures needed to facilitate the award of academic or workforce credits; and other measures that support career guidance, training, and job placement.

<http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/vetsvcs/college-credit-heroes-report.pdf>