



Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee

September 23, 2026

Agenda

- TWC Welcome/Opening Remarks/Roll Call
- AEL Updates
- Committee Business and Discussions
 - Announce new Advisory Committee Member
 - Discussion: AEL Strategic Plan FY 2026-2031
 - Discussion: Next Steps

Welcome and Remarks

- Kathy Zarate, State AEL Director
- Commission Remarks
 - Commissioner Connett

Roll Call

Member	Location	Representing	Affiliation	Term Expires
Leslie Cantu	San Antonio	Business	Assistant Vice President of Administration, <u>Toyotetsu</u>	September 2026 (Second Term)
Kevin Rose	Mount Pleasant	Higher Ed	Sr. Vice President for Student Success, Northeast Texas Community College	September 2026 (First Term)
Chris Tovar	Odessa	Higher Ed	CPR AHA Faculty Instructor, Continuing Education, Odessa College	September 2026 (First Term)
Dr. Ben Stafford	Port Arthur	Community College/Higher Ed	Vice President, Workforce and Continuing Education, Lamar State College—Port Arthur	May 2027 (Second Term)
Kristina Hartman	Huntsville	Corrections Education	Superintendent, Windham School District	May 2027 (Second Term)
Dr. Krista van Beurden, Presiding Officer	Corsicana	AEL/Higher Ed	Director of Adult Education, Navarro College	March 2028 (First Term)
Jeanne Burton	Kyle	Business	Vice President of People, ATX Specialty Foods	March 2028 (First Term)
Lisa McDaniel	Wichita Falls	Workforce Board	Executive Director, Workforce Solutions North Texas	March 2028 (First Term)
Patrice <u>Ananaba</u>	Fort Worth	Former AEL Student	Entrepreneur, You'r3 Not Alon3	July 2030 (First Term)

Adult Education Updates

Kathy Zarate

Director, Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)



Federal Funding Update

- H.R. 8210 – WIOA Reauthorization
 - Ordered to be reported by the Committee on Education and Workforce on April 21, 2026
 - No further updates available at this time

PY 26-27 Funding & Targets

- Total allocation AEL Providers for PY26-27 is \$67,524,995
- PY 2 funds and targets will carry over to PY 3
 - Awaiting Commission approval; item is on the agenda for 9/28 Commission Meeting

Adult Education & Family Literacy Week

• Celebrated September 14-18



THE STATE OF TEXAS GOVERNOR

*To all to whom these presents shall come,
Greetings: Know ye that this official recognition is presented to
all observing*

Adult Education and Family Literacy Week September 14–18, 2026

A strong education is the cornerstone upon which our state's economic success is built. This foundation requires support for the millions of adults who lack primary skills in reading and writing, which can contribute to them leaving formal education early. Though often overlooked, reading and writing are fundamental to nearly every aspect of life, and illiteracy can lead to personal and professional difficulties.

In Texas, however, we know that it is not our challenges that define us, but rather how we rise above them. Adult education programs throughout our state and nation offer innovative approaches that support adult learners, ongoing instruction, career counseling, and compassionate mentorship so that all Texans can achieve their full potential.

Texas thrives when all individuals are empowered to contribute to its success. To achieve this, we must ensure that every man, woman, and child possess the skills needed to succeed. Each year, a dedicated week brings attention to the challenges of illiteracy and innumeracy, rallies support for adult education programs, and encourages students to remain in school. By strengthening educational opportunities, we lay the groundwork for a thriving society that supports the Texas of tomorrow.

First Lady Cecilia Abbott joins me in encouraging all Texans to observe Adult Education and Family Literacy Week with appropriate programs and activities.

*In testimony whereof, I have hereunto
signed my name and caused the Seal of the
State of Texas to be affixed at the City of
Austin this the 2nd day of September, 2026.*



Greg Abbott
Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas

New Committee Member



- **Patrice Ananaba**
- Patrice Ananaba is an entrepreneur, Certified Women Empowerment Life Coach, Motivational Speaker, Workshop Facilitator, and Founder of Your3 Not Alon3 Enterprises LLC.
- After completing only the 9th grade, Patrice returned to education in 2021 and spent the next several years working toward her GED while building the vision that would become her business.
- In 2026, she earned her GED at age 39, was selected for the National Adult Education Honor Society, and served as the student speaker for the GED Class of 2026.
- Now serving on the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Advisory Committee, Patrice uses her lived experience and voice to help strengthen opportunities and support for adult learners.

Leslie Cantu



- Thank you for time and contributions to the AEL Advisory Committee!!

AEL Strategic Plan FY2026-2031

State-Level Action Items

- Developing key partnerships to support action items
- Developing a 2-prong communications strategy:
 - Communicating the value of AEL in the workforce ecosystem
 - Marketing/outreach support for AEL providers to increase enrollment
- Aligning with Professional Development Centers to support strategic plan goals
- Improving our AEL data system to improve use of data and track long-term outcomes related to employment and credential attainment

- System Area

- Learner

Objective 1:
Improve Program
Effectiveness
Through Quality
Outcomes

Action Item	Description
1	Develop and implement a career and college navigation and advising roadmap tailored to bridge students to postsecondary education and apprenticeships.
2	Align professional development activities to statewide needs, as identified through data analysis, to meet goals and objectives laid out in statewide plans.
3	Support the development or provision of adult education certifications to improve instructional quality and incentivize teacher retention.
4	Expand integrated education and training programs for middle-skill occupations and increase learner persistence to completion, certification, and employment.
5	Expand Pre-Apprenticeship Bridge programs for registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs.
6	Continue enhancements of the statewide data management information system, allowing multiple AEL programs to serve students with greater coordination and transparency.
7	Improve digital literacy through exposure to advanced education technology, including AI-powered tools and resources, alongside curriculum and hands-on practice.
8	Develop and disseminate resources for AEL instructors on evidence-based strategies to train parents on how to support their children’s education at home.

- System Area

- Learner

Objective 2:
Address Demand by
Expanding Access

Action Item	Description
1	Conduct a statewide needs assessment that includes existing available data, surveys, and focus groups with adult educators, learners, and employers.
2	Expand recruitment for special populations, including Internationally Trained Professionals, justice-involved individuals, and Opportunity Youth.
3	Grow and maintain distance learning options for students through increased asynchronous, hybrid, and flex learning options.
4	Develop cost effective strategies and leverage funding to support the expansion of AEL programming statewide.
5	Support pilot programs that test new approaches to adult education through accelerated learning programs and competency-based education.
6	Develop and implement fast track High School Equivalency (HSE) attainment models to allow for more students to be served in AEL programs.
7	Ensure students have access to portable post-secondary and training credentials and industry-based certifications to support their career pathways to sustainable employment or continued education.
8	Promote development of alternate options for entry into postsecondary education or training programs for students who have not completed high school or obtained a high school equivalent, such as with Ability-to-Benefit program models.
9	Partner with community organizations and schools to offer AEL programs with integrated parent education components, focusing on literacy and engagement strategies for families.

- System Area

- Learner

Objective 3:
Increase Alignment
and Coordination

Action Item	Description
1	Align instruction to industry by promoting teacher externships with high demand industry partnerships.
2	Create and implement work-based learning opportunities for learners with local industry partners through coordinated partnerships.
3	Continue enhancements of the statewide data management information system to allow multiple AEL programs to serve a learner with greater coordination and transparency.
4	Establish a coordinated, single-entry system for learners to receive integrated services from multiple workforce system partners.
5	Enhance data systems to provide timely reports to identify effective strategies and analyze student outcomes related to instructional gains, credentials, and employment.

- System Area

- Partner

Objective 1:
Improve Program
Effectiveness
Through Quality
Outcomes

Action Item	Description
1	Promote cross-referrals of low-level developmental education students into AEL programs to support college readiness at no-cost or low-cost, advancing Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) strategic plan goals of manageable student debt.
2	Establish a platform for Tri-Agency partners to align and share policies on credit portability and articulation, supporting efficient and flexible career pathways.
3	Analyze the conclusions from the Evaluation Study, develop partnerships with community-based organizations to expand access to comprehensive support services for AEL participants.
4	Strengthen the integration of AEL within Texas postsecondary education and training systems by collaborating with THECB, postsecondary institutions, the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and other stakeholders.
5	Establish partnerships with local school districts and parent resource centers to provide AEL students with information and training on school system navigation and parental involvement.

- System Area

- Partner

Objective 2:
Address Demand by
Expanding Access

Action Item	Description
1	Build strategic partnerships with community, faith-based, and non-TWC-funded organizations to expand AEL program capacity and offerings, particularly for low-literacy ELLs and internationally trained professionals, by leveraging shared funding and volunteer resources.
2	Develop partnerships with Workforce Solutions Offices, nonprofits, and community organizations to conduct targeted outreach, expanding AEL program reach to individuals lacking digital access, particularly in rural areas.
3	Create statewide AEL branding and outreach resources for local AEL programs to use for both recruitment in their respective communities and coordination with stakeholders.
4	Partner with community and postsecondary institutions to expand AEL access through alternative entry pathways like Ability-to-Benefit program models.

- System Area

- Partner

Objective 3:
Increase Alignment
and Coordination

Action Item	Description
1	Develop and implement a joint TWC policy across WIOA Titles I, II, and IV to promote AEL co-enrollment and referrals for customers needing AEL support to achieve education or career goals.
2	Evaluate co-enrollment data with WIOA core partners to determine its impact on AEL participants' rate of employment, increased wages, and job prospects.
3	Coordinate with partners on the use of alternative testing options to promote streamlined access to AEL programs without duplication of student testing.
4	Improve AEL and Board-administered program performance accountability by enhancing data collection, management, and reporting, including addressing data gaps, improving data systems and dashboards, and ensuring accurate and timely reporting of noncredit and short-term credentials.
5	Facilitate opportunities for Board, Vocational Rehabilitation, AEL and community stakeholders to share best practices for implementing strategic frameworks that support career pathways.
6	Promote integrated education and training career pathway models across AEL, credit, and continuing education Career Technical Education programs, including exploring and incorporating micro-credentials in collaboration with THECB.
7	Establish partnerships to develop outreach and follow-up services for AEL populations requiring additional supports, including justice-involved individuals, adult learners with disabilities, opportunity youth, and internationally trained professionals.
8	Partner with employers, economic development organizations, and employer organizations to launch a statewide campaign showcasing AEL as an economic and community development tool.
9	Establish partnerships for cross-training among AEL programs, Local Workforce Development Boards, and Workforce Solutions Offices to develop integrated intake models and increase referrals and service coordination.

- System Area

- Employer

Objective 1:
Improve Program
Effectiveness
Through Quality
Outcomes

Action Item	Description
1	Develop and Expand Apprenticeship Bridge programs to support pipeline to Apprenticeships in high-demand and emerging industries
2	Partner with employers to implement career pathway models, incorporating micro-credentials and incumbent worker training, to improve employee retention and promote growth opportunities.
3	Provide curriculum resources for AEL programs to develop work-based learning strategies and frameworks that include employability skills and digital literacy.

- System Area

- Employer

Objective 2:
Address Demand by
Expanding Access

Action Item	Description
1	Develop partnerships with employers to develop targeted training programs that address specific skill gaps in the workforce.
2	Promote AEL partnerships with employers to actively hire adult learners facing employment barriers, such as with employers who participate in TWC’s We Hire Ability program or hire justice-involved individuals.
3	Launch a statewide campaign to increase AEL visibility as a crucial economic and community development tool to gain support from employers, economic development organizations, and employer organizations.

- System Area

- Employer

Objective 3:
Increase Alignment
and Coordination

Action Item	Description
1	Align Tri-Agency policies and credit transfer pathways with industry skill requirements through employer partnerships, ensuring the workforce development system directly addresses employer needs.
2	Support teacher externships for adult educators to learn more about industry needs and to engage in hands-on industrial experience to incorporate real-world lessons into classroom curriculum.
3	Enhance AEL program relevance by incorporating occupation-specific skills and work-readiness training, informed by employer needs assessments and active employer engagement.
4	Conduct a comprehensive economic impact study of adult education and literacy within the state/region and disseminate the findings of the report to policymakers and community leaders to advocate for increased AEL investment.
5	Actively participate in regional economic development initiatives to position AEL as a key partner in developing talent pipelines for critical industries.

Open Discussion: State-Level Partnerships

- From your perspective (workforce board, former student, higher education, employer, corrections) consider these questions:
 - Who should we partner with at a state-level to support our strategic plan goals?
 - What specific organizations do we need to connect with to communicate the value of AEL to the workforce sector?
 - What specific organizations will help us with recruitment/outreach of potential participants?

Open Discussion: Communications Strategy

- From your perspective (workforce board, former student, higher education, employer, corrections) consider these questions:
 - Who should we keep in mind when developing our communications strategy?
 - How would you describe the value of AEL based on your current role?
 - What should workforce/employers know about AEL?
 - What should potential AEL participants know about AEL?

Open Discussion: Data System Improvements

- From your perspective (workforce board, former student, higher education, employer, corrections) consider these questions:
 - What AEL program data is important to you in your role?
 - What AEL program data is not important to you?

Open Discussion

- When thinking about the AEL Strategic Plan Action Items, From your perspective (workforce board, former student, higher education, employer, corrections) consider this question:
 - What is the one action item that would most significantly change the trajectory of an adult learner in Texas over the next five years?



Questions?
Additional Comments?

Request Before Next Meeting

- TWC will send out an email before the next meeting with any information that needs to be previewed.
- For our next meeting on December 16, 2026
 - You can submit your recommendations or questions to soyla.luna@twc.texas.gov

2026 Meeting Dates

- Wednesday, December 16, 2026
- Meeting time will remain at 1:30PM