

Illinois Adult Education Enrollment Study

Submitted to:
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Adult Education and Family Literacy
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Conducted By:
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Janet Scogins, M.S.
Dr. Jim Thompson
Linda Reabe, M.S.

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a compilation of information from Illinois adult education programs and research on open, fixed and managed enrollment. A survey was sent to all Illinois adult education programs requesting their participation. Eighty responses were received, an 80% response rate. The survey had a series of primarily open-ended questions. Programs were very forthcoming with their responses and input. The demographic detail of the survey response is included in Section II. The survey can be reviewed in its entirety in Appendix A. The responses are included in Appendix B.

The focus of the study was to include advantages and disadvantages of enrollment types and to further study the following: which type, or combination of enrollment types, may be most effective to serve adult learners; how programs determine what type will best allow them to serve learners while adhering to guidelines and policy set forth by individual institutions and/or state and federal guidelines; and research as it applies to each of the enrollment types. Three areas emerged regarding the impact of enrollment in Illinois and in alignment with research available. They included access to the program, instruction and outcomes. An overview of the current research available can be found in Section III. Further research is included in Sections IV – VI of this report following a detailed account of responses from Illinois programs and the various issues as identified or discussed by Illinois administrators.

Background Information

The Three Enrollment Types

Adult education programs nationwide enroll students into classes through three main enrollment structures: open, fixed, and managed. These three enrollment types may be known by varying names in different parts of the country, but their major characteristics are the same.

Definitions

1. Open enrollment, also known as continuous enrollment, rolling enrollment, and open entry/open exit, is a system that allows learners to enter and exit a class at nearly any point throughout its term. Learners are free to come to class when they can, miss when they must, drop out for a while, and return without any wait time. Typically, teachers receive no notice of or information on new learners before they arrive in class.
2. Fixed enrollment, also known as closed enrollment, is a system that has a few days at the beginning of the class designated for intake and enrollment. Additional new learners are allowed into class during the first few class sessions only. After that, enrollment is closed for the duration of the term. If learners drop out of class, they must wait to re-enroll until the

next class session. Typically, classes are long, 3 months or more in length.

3. Managed enrollment, also known as managed instruction, or managed scheduling is a system developed by local programs that is characterized by efforts to build upon the strengths of the above two systems and minimize their challenges. The entry points are set at logical break points in the curriculum, or at the beginning of short classes or modules (typically 3-6, or up to 10 weeks long) Class terms are usually shorter than in open or fixed enrollment, determined by examining program data to identify how many weeks students attend a class before attrition sets in. Group intake, orientation and pre-testing sessions occur before each entry point and outside of class. Teachers receive information on new learners prior to their arrival in class on the designated dates.

Why are there three types?

Prior to the passage of the Workforce Investment Act, Adult Education programs' federal and state mandate was to serve the maximum number of the "least educated and most in need" adult students. In practice, programs concentrated on building strong delivery systems that offered large numbers of students the maximum opportunity to participate in classes.

Open enrollment was the logical structure to support bringing in and providing some instruction to large numbers of adults who had multiple life challenges and barriers to consistent and predictable schedules and attendance. It served the need of students who were unable to maintain consistent attendance; and served the need of programs to keep classes consistently filled and keep serving large numbers of learners even with problems of attendance and attrition. Programs were financially rewarded for having large numbers of students enrolled.

With the passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the focus of Adult Education has changed from providing services to producing outcomes defined by WIA. Programs are financially rewarded for learners who produce measurable benefits (on outcomes defined by WIA) such as educational level gains, or high school completions. Open enrollment does not support a drive towards producing or capturing measurable gains very well. With students entering and exiting at different times, capturing valid pre-post tests becomes very difficult. In addition, programs are directed to focus on providing instruction of sufficient intensity and duration that would be expected to produce such outcomes.

Fixed enrollment would seem to be the answer to many of these issues. However, adult education programs using fixed enrollment often faced another set of problems. Large numbers of students might enroll for the beginning of the class, but there is usually a high attrition rate for these classes, at least partially

due to the reality of the complexity and multiple life challenges of educationally and economically adult student's lives. By the end of the term, there were often only a few students left attending the class. The programs did not have enough continuing enrollments to "count" to cover the cost of the program, and the effect of having near empty classes was de-motivating to the remaining students and teachers. The number of students who persisted long enough to make it to post test and make measurable learning gains was small. And there was the problem of access and flexibility. Significant numbers of students were left out of educational opportunity with fixed enrollment.

Managed Enrollment was developed by local programs out of frustration with the limitations of both open and fixed enrollment. It combines the strengths of both systems and is intended recognize and allow for the realities and challenges of the adult learner's life, while providing instruction in a sequential, stable educational environment likely to produce results. Some programs have successfully used forms of managed enrollment for at least some of their classes for many years. States turning to managed enrollment report seeing increasing attendance, persistence, and learning gains. In addition, they are able to capture and report more outcome gains to funders than with open enrollment. And managed enrollment is now being urged by WIA as being the model needed that will allow programs to increase their effectiveness as defined by WIA outcomes. It is suggested that programs will be better able to meet the funding requirements of intensity and duration outcomes with managed enrollment than with the other types.

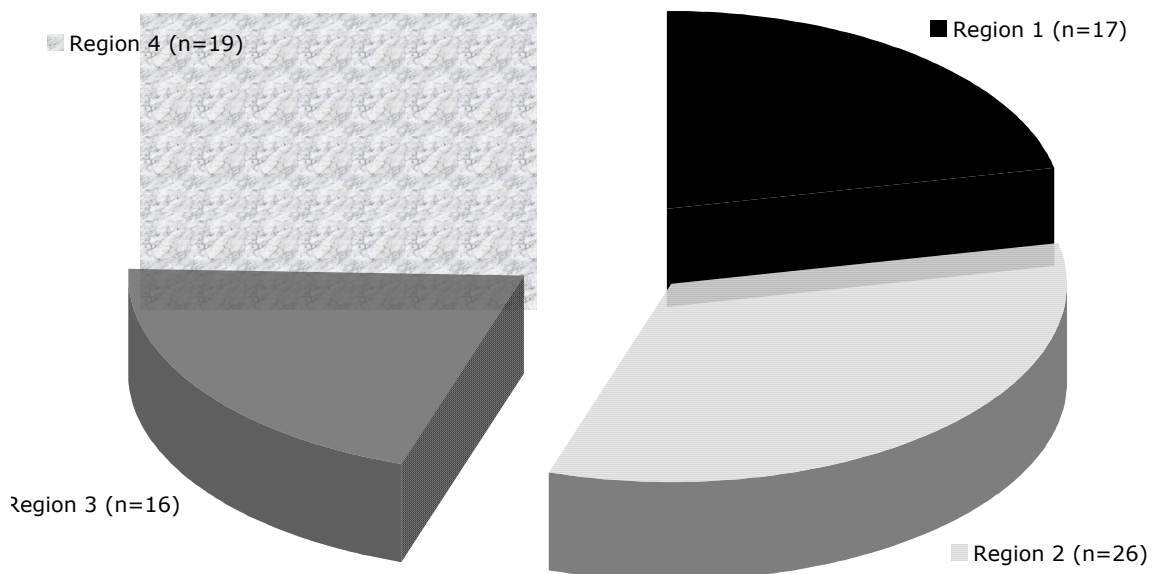
SECTION II. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Information was collected through an on-line survey. An e-mail sent to adult education program administrators in Illinois by David Baker (ICCB), who provided a hyperlink to the survey (see Appendix A) and requested the administrators complete it. Two weeks after the first request, a second request was sent to remind those who had not yet completed the survey to do so. Eighty (80) adult education program administrators responded to the survey, which yielded a response rate of 80%, (which is exceptionally good for organization surveys, see Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, & Booth-Kewley, 1997).

Distribution of respondents in Illinois communities and educational settings

Respondents were asked to provide information pertaining to the region in which they worked, the geographical characteristics of their communities, and the settings in which their programs were located. Data show a diverse cross-section of respondents participated in the survey. This information is summarized in the three charts below.

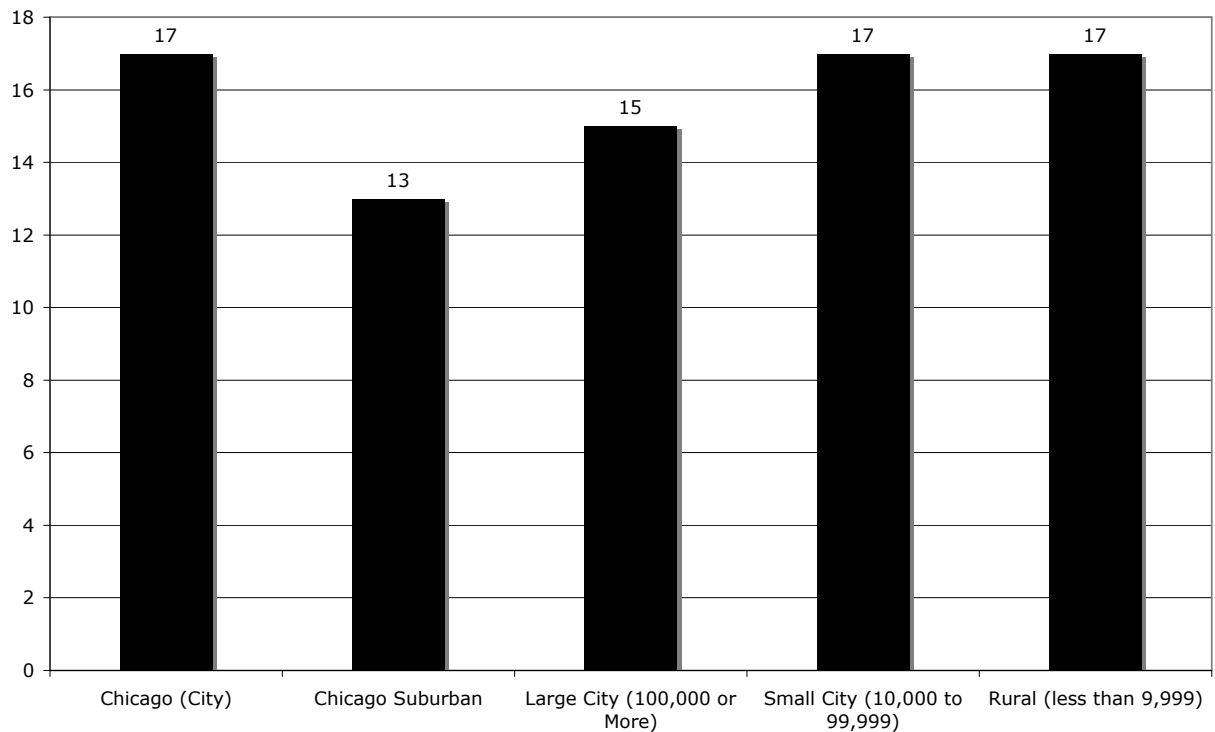
Survey Respondents by Region



As is evident in the figure above, Region 2 provided the largest number of respondents (n=26). However, there was good participation from each region of the state.

Survey respondents were also asked to identify the geographical characteristics of the communities in which their programs operated. The chart on the next page shows five categories from which they had to choose. The tri-modal distribution is indicative of the relatively equal participation from program administrators working in 5 different types of communities in Illinois.

Survey Respondents by Geographical Area



The final question focused on the settings in which the adult education program administrators were based. For this variable the distributions were not equal, which is not surprising because certain settings are far more commonly used than others. As is shown in the table below, the survey respondents worked out of 5 different settings, with community colleges being the most common and correctional facilities being the least common.

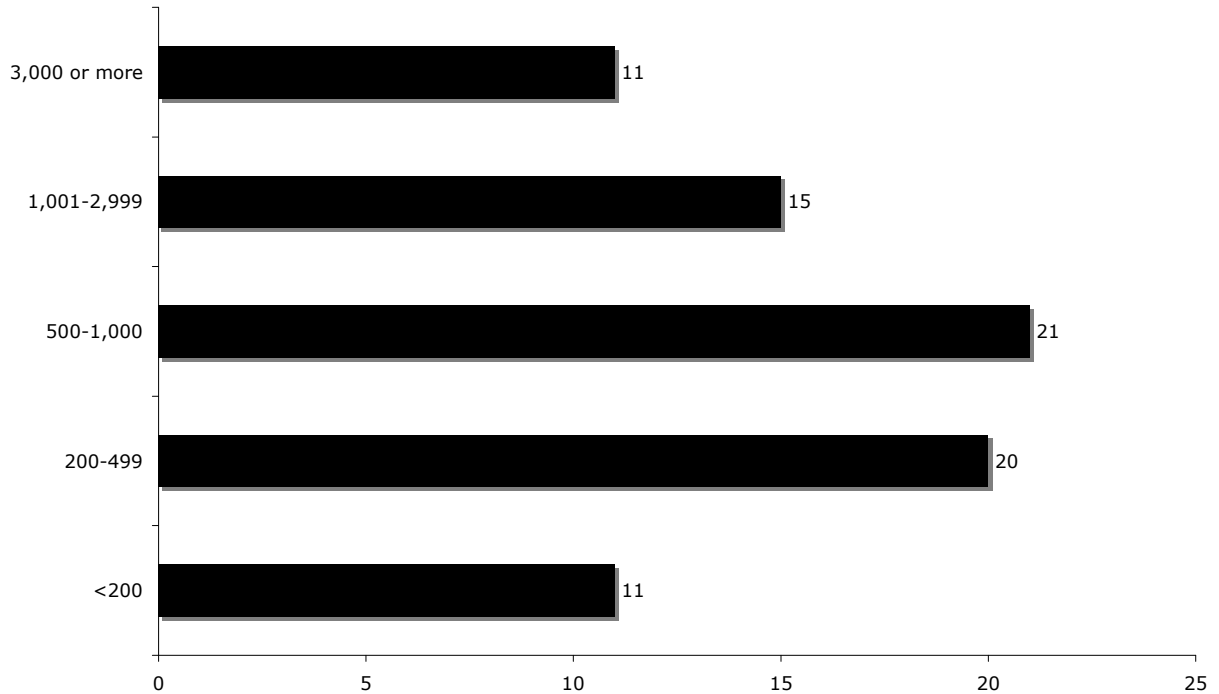
Settings where respondents' adult education programs were based

Setting	#	%
Community college	35	44%
Community based organization	20	25%
Public School	15	19%
Regional Office of Education	8	10%
Department of Corrections	1	1%

Distribution of respondents by program size and type

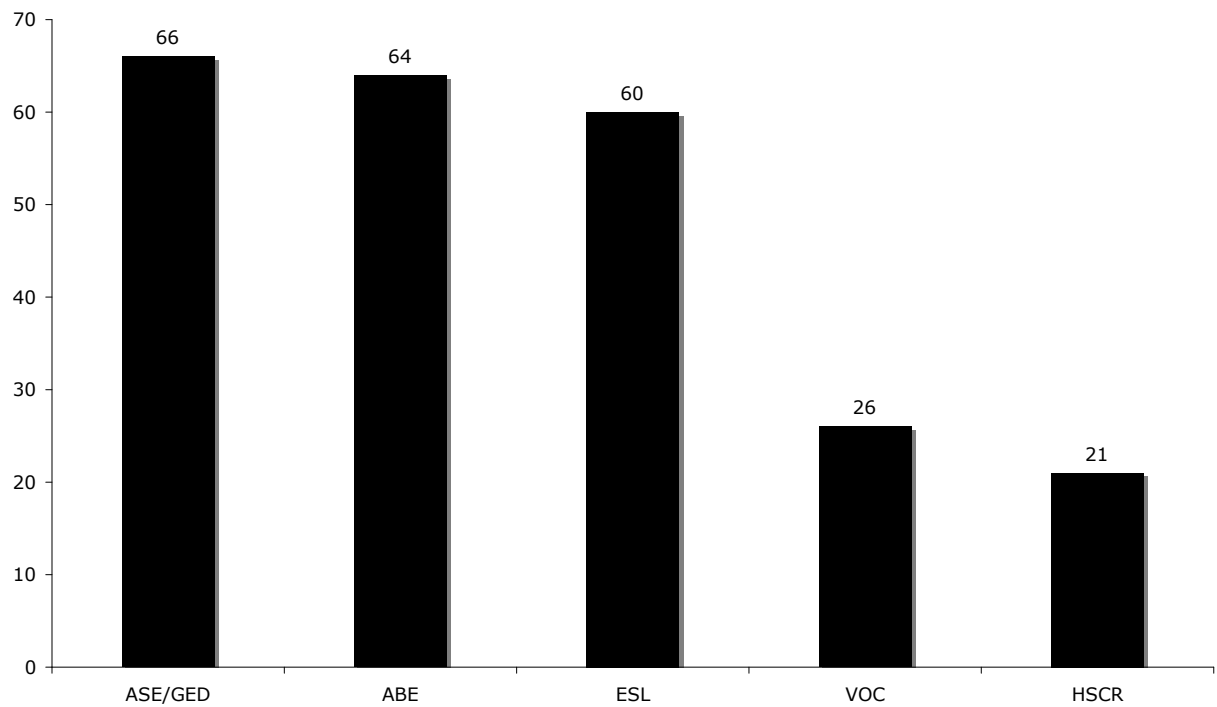
Respondents were asked, “Approximately how many students does your adult education program service annually?” The range of responses was considerable, with the smallest program reporting serving 23 students and the largest program reportedly serving 8,000 students. Approximately half (53%) of respondents reported their program served between 200 and 1,000 students. However, there was also significant representation from both relatively large and small adult education programs.

Number of Respondents from Adult Ed. Programs Serving Populations of Different Sizes

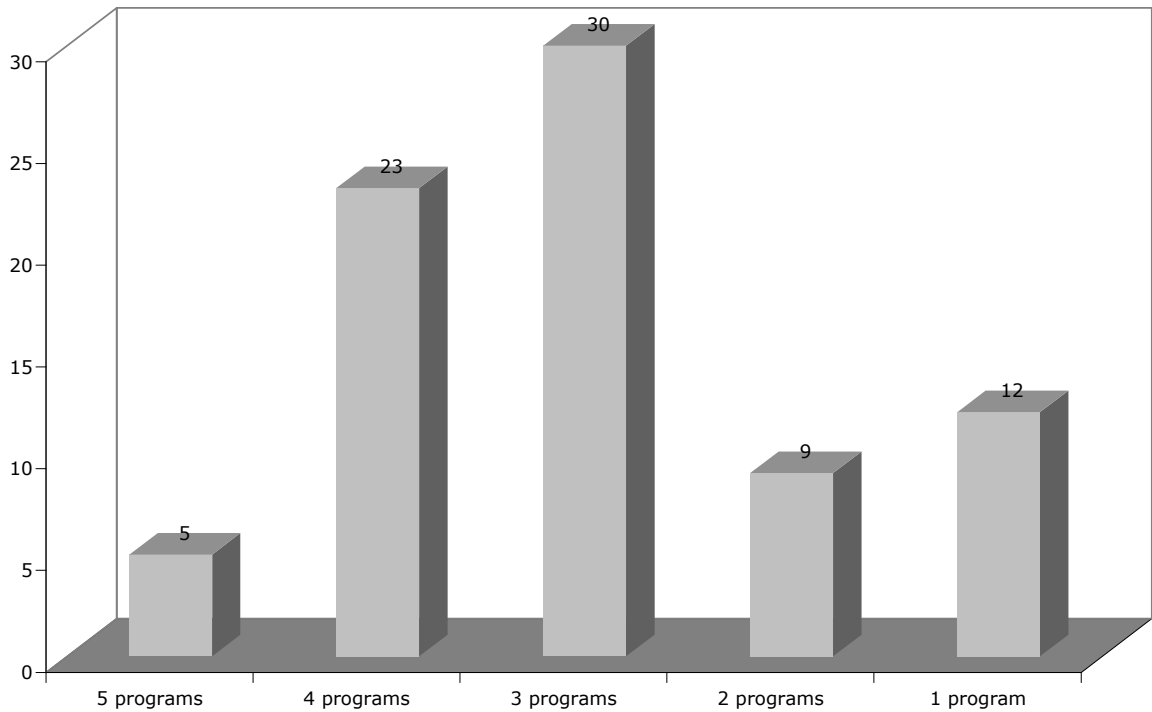


The final demographic question focused on the types of adult education courses the respondents administered. As can be seen in the first chart on the following page, large numbers of respondents worked in adult education programs with ASE/GED, ABE, and ESL classes. Somewhat less common were VOC and HSCR course offerings. Also, most respondents worked in programs providing more than one program of study. Most common were respondents whose adult education program provided 3 or 4 different programs of study.

Frequency of 5 Programs of Study Offered by Respondents' Adult Education Programs



Number of Programs of Study Included in Respondents' Adult Education Program



III. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Research tells us that choice of enrollment type has a significant impact on who has access to adult education; the kind and quality of instruction and learning that occurs; and the outcomes that programs can capture and report.

Specific differences that exist between open, fixed and managed enrollment classes include:

- attendance, retention, and persistence rates
- intensity and duration of instruction
- degree of learner engagement
- types of learning achieved
- levels of learning achieved
- types of instruction provided
- amount of instruction provided
- focus on curriculum given
- amount of sequential instruction provided
- learning gains achieved
- learner goals met
- number of outcome gains captured
- teacher and learner satisfaction

These differences come about due to the classroom environment set up by the enrollment structure.

- Open enrollment classes are heavily impacted by the open access and flexibility of the structure allowing ongoing entry and exit of students into classrooms.
- Fixed enrollment classes are heavily impacted by the structure of limited access and flexibility, but ability to focus on curriculum.
- Managed enrollment classes are an attempt to capitalize on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both open and fixed enrollment.

Additional details and information is embedded within the body of the report. See below: "Organization of the research in this report".

Sources:

Beder 1990, 2001, 2000; Belzer 1998, 2003; Chisman 2007; Comings 1999, 2000, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007; Condelli 2003; CAAL 2005; Cronen 2007; Drago-Severson 2001; Hyzer 2006, 2007; Kegan 2001; Long 2001; Mlitz 2008; Povenmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; Reder 2001; Robinson-Geller 2005, 2006, Smith & Hofer 2003; Snow & Strucker 1999; Strucker 2006, 2007; Taylor 2005; Tolbert 2005; Wrigley 2003; Zafft 2006; Ziegler 2001.

Organization of the research in this report:

- **The advantages and disadvantages** associated with each enrollment type according to research are discussed in Section V at the end of each enrollment type.
- **How Illinois administrators' responses compare to research** are found at the end of each Survey section.
- **Profiles of 5 states' enrollment responses** are found on the following pages.
- **Resource list for research** findings are in Appendix D.
- **An Annotated Bibliography** of resources for providers interested in further information is forthcoming and will be placed on the Center for Adult Learning Leadership website.

How Are Other States Responding?

Many states are reviewing their current policies and systems to determine how to better meet changing directives and needs. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Report to Congress (2003), states are increasingly opting to institute managed enrollment policies in an effort to satisfy federal funding guidelines concerning sufficient intensity and duration of instruction. A preliminary search of state involvement indicates that more than half of the states are involved in some stage of implementing managed enrollment. Examples of five states in various stages follow.

Kansas

Kansas turned to managed enrollment eight years ago.

- Has been requiring managed enrollment since FY 2000
- Has encouraged its use since 1992

Providers feared negative funding impact:

- Most resisted moving to managed enrollment since funding was based on hours of participation
They believed enrollments would go down and they would lose funding.
- This was countered by state policy change: Programs became funded by outcomes, not contact hours

Outcomes:

- Actual outcome: "number of individuals served went down, but hours of participation went up because individuals who attended generated many more hours than participants had previously generated
- Average hours of participation per student doubled (from 40 – 79 hours) FY99-FY07 data

- Learners enrolled as “informed customers” of adult education services Programs now express preference for managed over open enrollment

Managed Enrollment Requirements:

- Establish regularly scheduled group orientations outside of class
- Followed by 1:1 counseling
- Aligned with classes with defined beginning and end dates
- Establish attendance policies (tardies and absences)
- Learner makes a commitment to attend the next 6-8 weeks (or length of the session enrolled in which she enrolls)

Workshop available:

State Director, Dianne Glass, has a workshop available that she has delivered to other states. She is available to travel and share what her state has learned about managed enrollment.

Contact person: Per Dianne Glass, State Director, dglass@ksbor.org

Kentucky

Kentucky is experimenting with the use of managed enrollment.

Kentucky implemented “New Framework for Adult Education” in 2008

- Encouraging programs to think out of the box
- The first year is a transitional year:
- No sanctions for not meeting enrollment or performance goals this year
- “Hold harmless” year for those piloting managed enrollment

The state introduced managed enrollment to providers in 2007 through a workshop at the fall conference as a way to increase retention and student outcomes

- The session was one of the highest attended
- Come explore how you might pilot managed enrollment in your program.
- The goal of this workshop is to provide participants with a general understanding of managed enrollment strategies in adult education programs and guidelines for implementing managed enrollment in their respective agencies.

The Regional professional development centers provided follow up training during the year:

- How to develop policies: attendance, student expectations
- Create a student handbook
- Develop a class syllabus and schedule

- Plan instructional strategies
- Design student retention strategies
- Create marketing materials

Programs are piloting managed enrollment:

- In the Summer of 2007, 18% of programs reported having managed enrollment in place
- By the end of Spring 2008, 50% reported piloting managed enrollment

Contact person:

Marilyn Lyons, Research and Data analysis Specialist, Marilyn.lyons@ky.gov

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is in the process of encouraging programs to move to managed instruction.

- Pennsylvania refers to managed enrollment as “managed instruction” because programs at first thought it only impacted the intake and orientation components, not the classroom

New components required to be offered together last year are:

- Managed enrollment
 - Scheduled group intakes and orientations outside of class;
 - Classes with beginning and ending dates that students entered as a group
 - Classes with a clear scope of work to be covered
- Intensive instruction
 - 20 hour or two 10 hour classes
- Contextualized instruction
- Move toward hiring full time staff

Outcomes to date:

- Anecdotal information only (program began this year):
- Increased student progress and higher teacher satisfaction
- Programs report being pleased with the results. (Programs are funded on outcomes, not enrollments)
- The state has been working on how to best fund programs on outcomes.

The state has been working on its performance funding formula and is moving to more outcome based funding:

- It is felt that managed enrollment will be a good match

Contact: Rose Brandt, State Director, rosbrandt@state.pa.us

Florida

Florida is a state that is considering managed enrollment.

- Its State Director has supported it for many years
- Many ESL programs, especially in community colleges, use managed enrollment because of its institutional “fit”
- Other programs still fear its potential impact on enrollment

The state calls managed enrollment “managed scheduling”

- To connote a change in programming instead of a change in acceptance into a program.
- Before, some programs were seeing it as an initiative that dealt with access into programs

Models

- Recommend keeping an open enrollment classroom for students who cannot commit to attending classes with managed enrollment schedule.
- ESL in community colleges are already managed enrollment because of institutional requirements. It allows them to operate on the college schedule and fit in with the college system.

Changes being made

- Prior to 2006, funding for programs was enrollment based, so programs focused heavily on enrolling students.
- As funding becomes increasingly outcome based, Anderson believes managed enrollment will become more attractive to programs.

Outcomes with managed enrollment

- Programs are reporting increased retention and learning gains.

Contact person: Philip Anderson, State Director, Philip.Anderson@fldoe.org

Oregon

Oregon is an experienced user of managed enrollment for 20 years.

- Oregon turned to managed enrollment in 1988
- Managed enrollment is now the norm

Outcomes

- Positive changes in learning gains
- Increased persistence of learners

Key components

- Skills assessments and structured orientations take place before students enter classes
- Orientation sessions include goal setting, information about transition to work or further information, support services, orientation to the college as an institution, and skill assessment.
- Learner contracts are becoming increasingly used and are proving effective
- ESL orientations are translated into the learner's native language whenever possible

Managed Enrollment Models

- Includes skills assessments and structured Some colleges allow enrollment every week or two weeks
- Most allow students to begin classes two times in each term, or every five weeks
- Most classes are 10 weeks in length

For more information, see "Oregon Shines!" at <http://www.caalusa.org/oregonfinal.pdf>

SECTION IV

SURVEYING ENROLLMENT TYPE Enrollment Types Used by Illinois Programs

One of the key purposes of the study was to determine what kinds of enrollment types Illinois providers were using in their programs, with what frequency, and if different types were associated with certain kinds of classes more than others. The following Survey question was asked in order to obtain this information:

Survey Question:

Approximately what percentage of your classes are offered annually in each of the following enrollment structures? (Open, Fixed, Managed).

This question was repeated for each of the kind of classes offered throughout the adult education system in Illinois: ESL, ABE/ASE multilevel; ASE-GED; Vocational skills; and High school credit classes.

We would like to thank the Illinois administrators completing the survey for the time and attention to detail taken in providing the responses to this question. Detailed percentages were provided on each kind of class offered in every program type: community college, public school, community-based, and regional office of education throughout the state.

Overview of Findings.

- Illinois providers use all 3 kinds of enrollment structures.
- Open enrollment is the most commonly used structure; followed by fixed enrollment. Managed enrollment is also being used.
- Open enrollment is the most common model for adult education programs. Approximately 60% of all adult education classes are structured using open enrollment.
- Fixed enrollment is the second most common model, and is used in approximately 30% of adult education classes.
- Managed enrollment is used in approximately 10% of adult education classes. When managed enrollment is used, it is just as likely to be used as the sole enrollment model for a program as it is to be used in combination with open or fixed. When it is used in combination with open and fixed, there is likely to be a greater number of open and fixed classes offered in the program than managed.

- All 3 enrollment types are being used in every type of adult education program and in every kind of class offered in the state.
- Although some classes use only “open enrollment”, many programs appear to use, or at least are experimenting with using, a variety of enrollment approaches.

Research Response

According to the latest national survey available, open enrollment was used by approximately 80% of U.S. adult education programs. According to the U.S. Dept. of Education’s Report to Congress on State Performance, more states are beginning to implement managed enrollment policies in order to meet the NRS requirements. However, no national studies have been done to collect this data, According to the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy and other sources, there are no adequate data sources to provide us with current valid and reliable information regarding use of different enrollment types. The Illinois study will add to a critical need for a database.

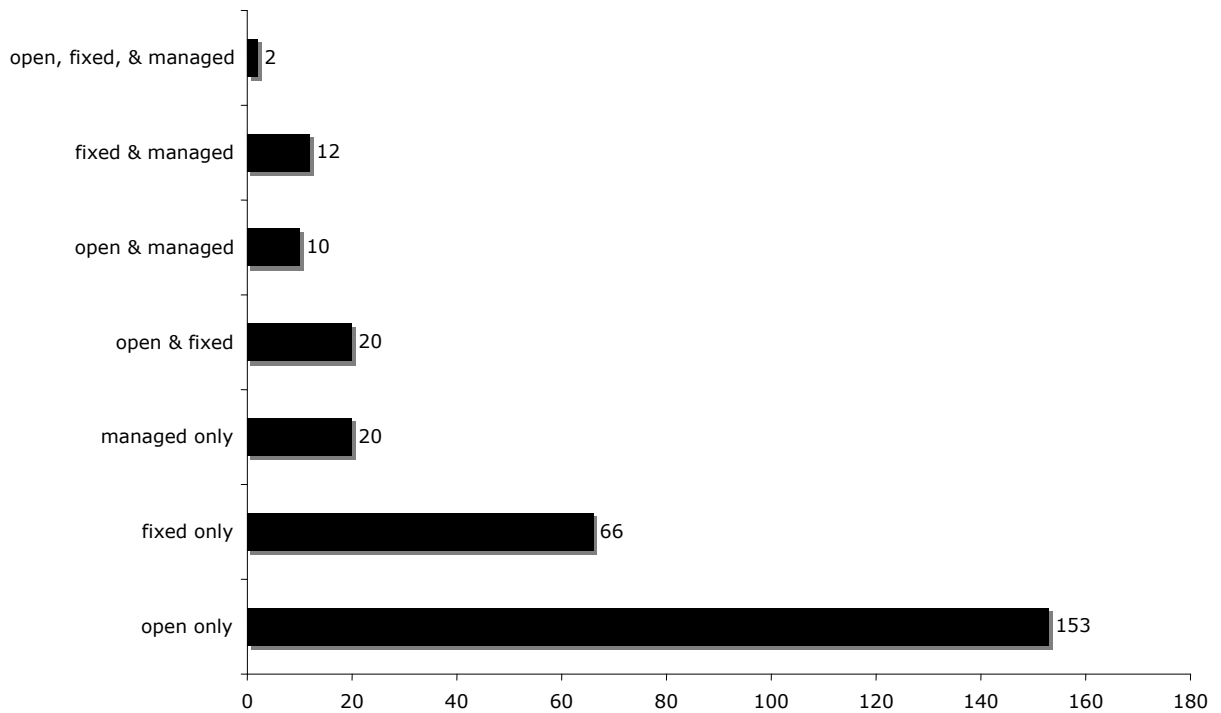
Sources: Comings (2006); Tamassia (2007); U.S. Department of Education Report to Congress (2003).

Graphs: Enrollment Types Used With Specific Class Types

The following 7 graphs detail information obtained regarding frequency with which programs used open, fixed, or managed enrollment structures with specific class types. Different charts are detailed for each class type:

1. Summary Chart, All Classes Combined
2. ESL Classes
3. ABE/ASE Multilevel Classes.
4. ABE Classes
5. ASE-GED Classes
6. Vocational Skills Classes
7. High School Credit Classes

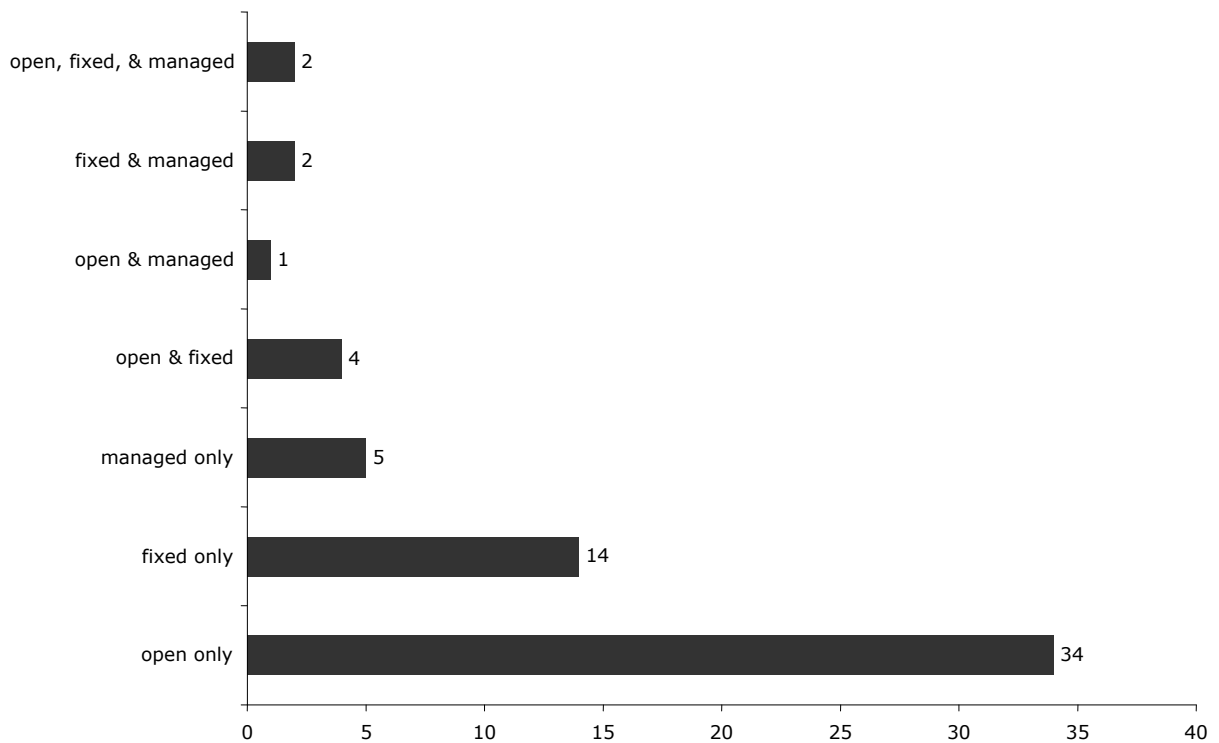
Frequency of Types of Enrollment Structures used by Adult Education Programs (combined totals, n=283)



1. SUMMARY CHART: All Class Types Combined

- 54% of programs used open enrollment structures only.
- 23% of programs used fixed enrollment structures only.
- 7% used managed enrollment structures only.
- 16% used a combination of enrollment structures.

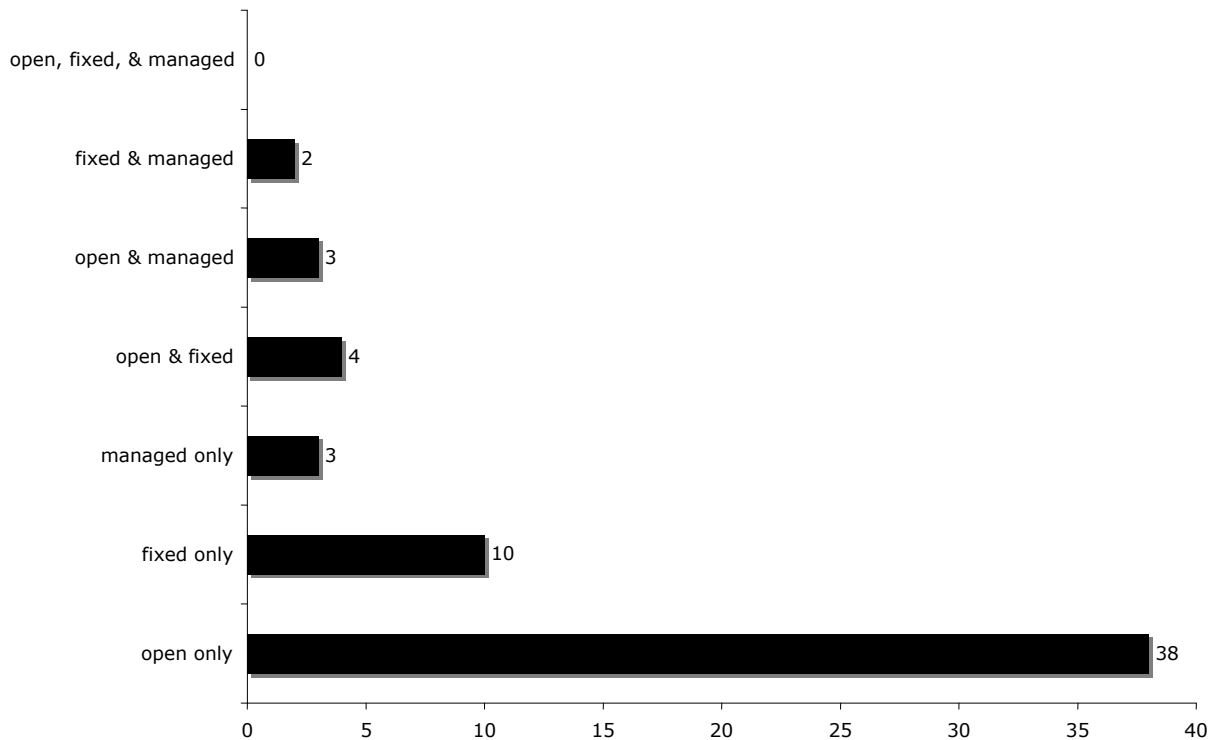
Frequency of Types of Enrollment Structures in ESL classes (n=62)



2. ESL CLASSES

- 62 of the 80 programs (77.5%) provided ESL classes, making it the most common adult education class type represented in this survey.
- 34 of the 62 (55%) had “open only” enrollment structures.
- 14 had “fixed only” enrollment structures (23%).
- 5 (8%) had “managed only” enrollment structures.
- 9 (14%) had a combination of structures.

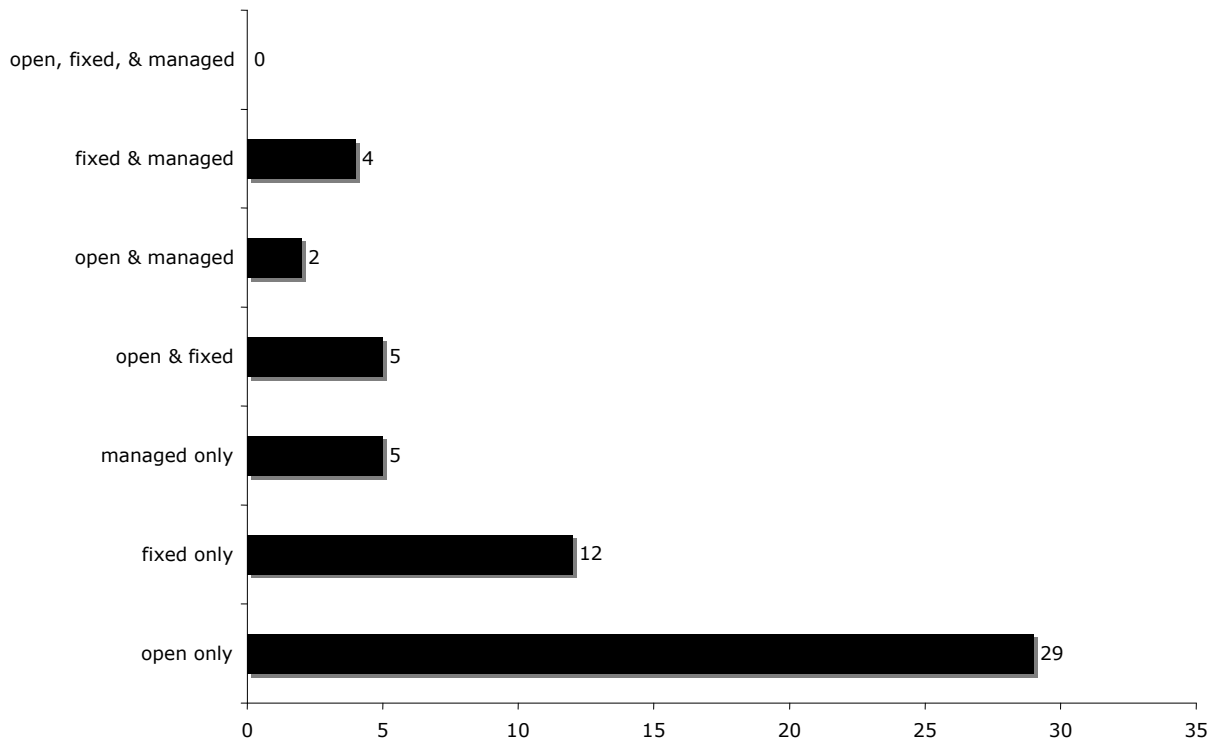
Frequency of Types of Enrollment Structures in ABE/ASE classes (n=60)



3. ABE/ ASE MULTILEVEL CLASSES

- 60 of the 80 programs (75%) provided ABE/ASE multilevel classes, making it also a relatively common adult education class type represented in this survey.
- Compared to the other large/commonly provided programs (i.e., ESL, ABE, ASE/GED) ABE/ASE is most dominated by the “open only” enrollment structure. Almost two of every three (38 of the 60, or 64%) programs had open enrollment as their only structure for their ABE/ASE multilevel classes.
- 10 had “fixed only” enrollment structures (17%).
- 3 had “managed only” enrollment structures (5%).
- 9 had combinations of structures (14%)

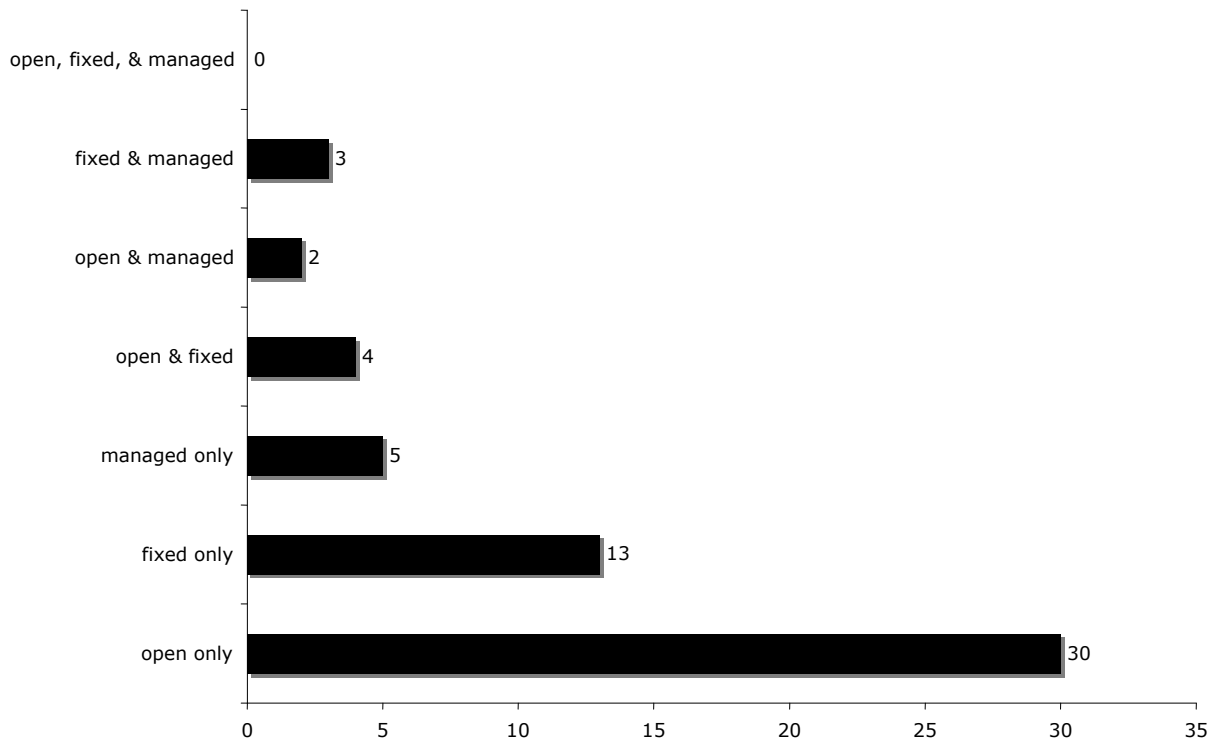
Frequency of Types of Enrollment Structures in ABE classes (n=57)



4. ABE CLASSES

- 57 of the 80 programs (72%) provided ABE classes, making it also a relatively common adult education program represented in this survey.
- Open enrollment structure only (51%) is by far the most common followed by
- Fixed enrollment structure only (21%), which is a distance second, but more than twice as common as
- Managed enrollment structure only (9%) or any of the
- Combination approaches (19%)

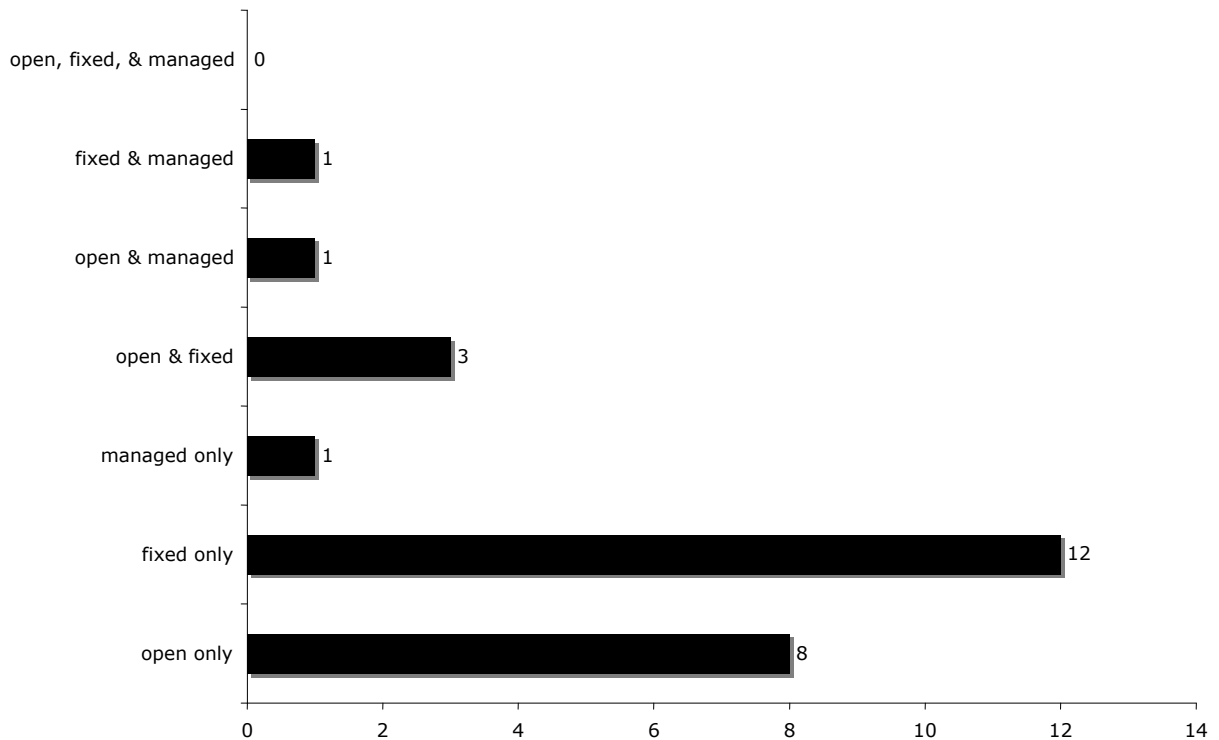
Frequency of types of Enrollment Structures in ASE/GED classes (n=57)



5. GED CLASSES

- 57 of the 80 programs (72%) provided ASE/GED classes, making it also a relatively common adult education program represented in this survey.
- Open enrollment structure only 30 (53%)
- Fixed enrollment structure only 13 (23%)
- Managed enrollment structure only 5 (9%)
- Combination enrollment structures 9 (15%)

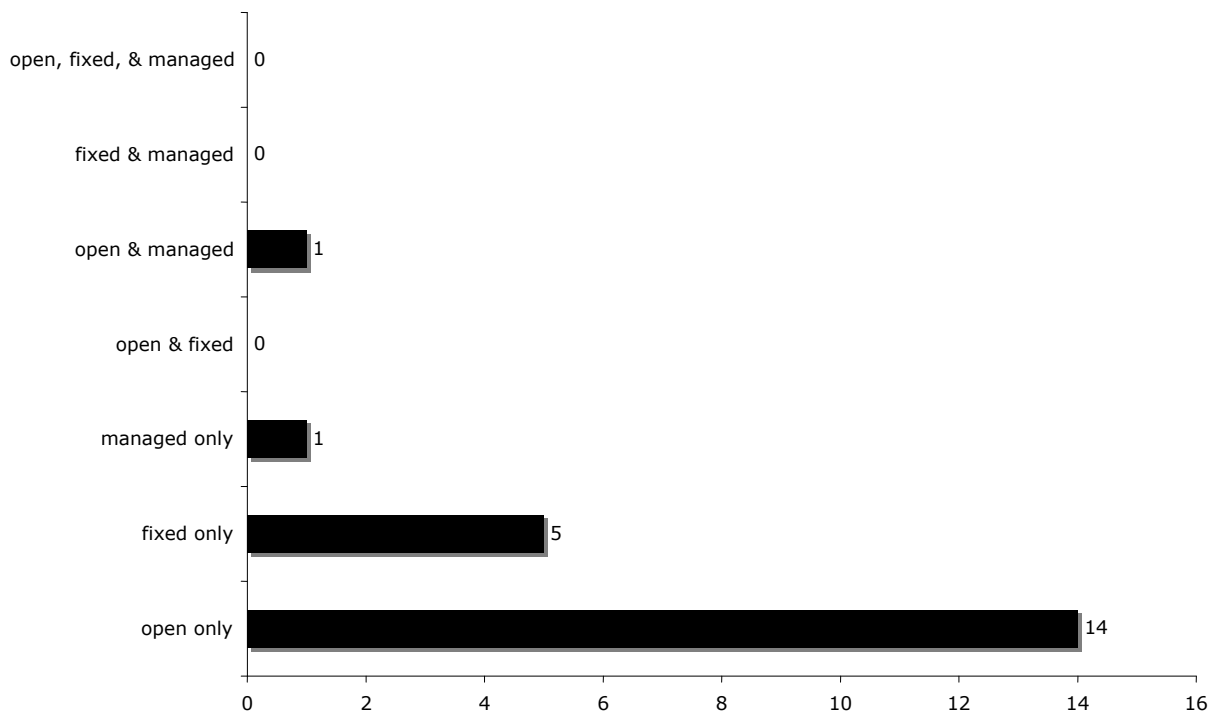
Frequency of types of Enrollment Structures in VOC classes (n=26)



6. VOCATIONAL SKILLS CLASSES

- 26 of the 80 programs (33%) provided VOC classes, making it a relatively less common adult education program represented in this survey.
- VOC classes were the only type of adult education program where “open only” enrollment was not the most common enrollment model used. Fixed enrollment was the most common enrollment type used (46% of the programs).
- “Open enrollment only” was used by 8 programs (31%)
- “Fixed enrollment only” was used by 12 programs (46%)
- “Managed enrollment only” was used by 1 program (4%). Managed enrollment was used alone or in combination with other enrollment types by 3 programs (12%)
- A combination of types of enrollment was used by 5 programs (19%)

Frequency of Types of Enrollment Structures in High School Credit Classes (n=21)



7. HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT CLASSES

- 21 of the 80 programs (26%) reported providing High School Credit classes, making it the least common adult education program represented in this survey.
- Open enrollment only was used by 14 programs (67%)
- Fixed enrollment only was used by 5 programs (24%)
- Managed enrollment only was used by 1 program (4.5%)
- One program used a combination of open and managed enrollment (4.5%)

DETERMINING ENROLLMENT TYPE

The survey provided an opportunity to gain detailed information regarding the factors and processes used by programs to offer the most appropriate enrollment type for adult learners. It is important to understand the background associated with each enrollment type and how the program decides which enrollment type to offer. The survey requested respondents to identify factors used in the determination of the enrollment type and whether or not it was their opinion they were offering the best educational match for their students.

FACTORS AFFECTING DECISION

The first question discussed is the following: *What factors affect your decision about whether to use open, fixed or managed enrollment? (These could include educational, institutional, program, or other factors or concerns. Please be specific.)*

- The fact that over half of the respondents provided 3 or more factors suggests that administrators consider multiple factors when deciding enrollment structures, or at least feel that multiple factors should be considered. Three major classes of factors emerged: **Student needs, system requirements and incentives, and Historical/Institutional practices**. Descriptions and sample quotes for each factor are provided below.
- **Student needs** was the most commonly mentioned factor. Comments about student needs can be further subdivided into two classes. The larger class of **student needs** is focused on **student characteristics**. There was acknowledgement that students in adult education often have commitments (e.g., work), priorities (e.g., families), and other demands on their time that interfere with their educational progress. Respondents believed that adult education programs have the responsibility to structure enrollment practices based on the realities of their students' lives, and several mentioned that open enrollment was the most flexible model. The smaller class of student needs is focused on **student learning needs** (i.e., how to best educate the students and maximize learning). Specific quotes to support the **student characteristics theme** include:
 - Meet ongoing educational needs of drop-outs
 - Students at xxx are given options to attend, one of the options is that there is no penalty when they are unable to come on a regular basis. Many students have babies, get job to support family, or are jailed. Knowing that they may return to school/courses/ classes with out being required to start all over during the school year helps eliminate stressors.
 - We have always used open enrollment. We feel our population is better served by having the ability to start and stop their education,

if needed. We find they are more willing to come back if they know we can re-enroll them.

- Students' work schedules change frequently
- Accepting students when they are ready to start
- Students' needs. Students often have shifting priorities, or have other commitments that fixed enrollment would punish them for.
- Our ESL students know that if they need to work they may come back during the year and not wait to be allowed to participate in classes.
- Students appreciate the flexible aspect of open enrollment.
- OPEN - A portion of our population is in prison or in jail, and we are constantly receiving new inmates into the program or losing them through release.
- Transient population
- Lack of public transportation

Specific quotes to support the **student learning needs** theme include:

- Curriculum/class goals. Vocational classes are linear. Students must be present throughout the course in order to complete successfully. Fixed enrollment is necessary for VOC classes.
- Learning outcomes are tied to course curricula - semester-long participation is needed
- Teacher effectiveness
- Research in many formats suggests that fixed enrollment classes have better retention, continuity, and measurable student gains.

- The **system requirements and incentives** factor focuses on influences that either state (i.e., ICCB) or local policies have on how programs are run or a desire to operate adult education programs in the most efficient manner as possible (e.g., maximize cost-effectiveness, maintain acceptable class & program size). Specific quotes to support the **system requirements and incentives** theme include:

- Increase enrollment numbers
- To Promote Maximum Enrollment Possible
- Funding process
- Cost effective
- How attendance is entered into the software system
- It meets the needs of the college.
- Staff time and effort is reduced with managed
- The way courses are approved with ICCB
- # of hours needed for Carnegie unit
- The STAR project currently being promoted by ICCB relies on the concept of the fixed enrollment model for student success
- Ability of staff to handle registration processes
- Data entry requirements for institution and funders
- Ease in record keeping

- State requirements. As part of the STAR initiative, we were told that classes must be managed enrollment. Therefore we have a managed enrollment ABE only class. This has been one of our lowest enrollment classes.
 - Easier on teaching staff
 - Difficulty of managing intake paperwork and testing on an ongoing basis makes fixed and managed enrollment options appealing.
 - Licensing & accreditation requirements
 - Instructor contract arrangements
 - Part-time instructional staff / scheduling issues
- The last theme, **Historical/Institutional practices**, relates to the fact that things are often done for the simple reason of past practice. Changing the status quo requires extra effort and takes people out of a “comfort zone”. Multiple respondents simply indicated “institutional” in their response.
 - Institutional--it has always been this way
 - Has always been that way.
 - We have always done it that way

DETERMINING ENROLLMENT TYPE

The next question given to survey respondents related to the determination of enrollment type: *How do you determine an enrollment type for a particular class? (e.g., Why might one of your beginning ESL classes be fixed enrollment and another one be open?)*

There appears to be three ways adult education programs function in regard to deciding on enrollment type. The first way is to only use one approach for all classes. These programs determine enrollment types for each class based on what is used in all of the other classes. There is no variability. Specific quotes to support evidence of the default approach are provided below.

- All classes are open enrollment
- All are fixed.
- All are open enrollment at this time.
- Our enrollment is the same for all ESL classes, all ABE and GED classes and all vocational classes.
- Use same system for all
- Have never considered other types of enrollment in the past.

The second approach describes programs that have a default way for enrollment, but digress from the default when there seems to be a good reason (e.g., student needs, curricular considerations). Specific quotes to support evidence for this approach are provided below.

- A group will be open based exclusively on enrollment numbers. A group that fills up at the registration will be fixed. A group that needs more students will be open

- We currently use all open classes. We have experimented with only taking new students on a certain day of the week, for example, but now take students as they come as this seems simpler.
- Open enrollment is our default. We consider other types of enrollment as necessary.
- All of our classes are open enrollment. The only fixed enrollment we would offer would be in the form of 1-week, 1-credit workshops, which we are not doing right now.
- All are fixed entry. We are reviewing/considered a Managed Enrollment model for ABE/ASE instruction, as the drop-off by the end of the semester is significant.

The third approach is to make a determination on a course-by-course basis. Specific quotes to support evidence of the course-by-course approach are provided below.

- Decision is made based on the student population. If the students are primarily parents, students in our school sites who have multiple demands on them, I tend to create open enrollment classes.
- Based on how to best meet the needs of the adult learners in our program.
- Dependent upon site, student population to be served, i.e., Is the class largely employed adults? Adults with children? Other factors that may impede consistent attendance or affect enrollment at a given date/time?
- Class structure, and in class time determined to lead to the attainment of a GED
- Depends on the class curriculum
- The class's delivery model and student needs.

ASSIGNING ENROLLMENT TYPE

The survey asked Illinois programs to address the following question near the end of the survey: *Are you generally able to assign the enrollment type to your classes that you believe to be the best educational match? If not, why not?*

Many of the responses reiterated what they had previously commented on versus the possibility of *considering a different enrollment type*. 90% of respondents simply answered “yes” to this question. Few tried to explain why they answered “yes” as it was evident they simply did not feel any pressure to adopt enrollment types that were not proper educational matches. Seventeen responded fixed but indicated using fixed in combination with managed or open. A number of programs indicated they would consider managed, but would like to have more information. Comments included with a response of yes, are as follows:

- We use open for lack of enough information of using the other two options. If we knew more, we might make changes.
- We actually like the idea of fixed enrollment, especially since testing is a priority of the ICCB. We would have much more control over pre/post testing, better post rates and possibly more learning gains.
- I prefer using open, but I like the generation rate I get when I use fixed but that will not work with the majority of my population.

The few who answered differently (“no”, or “not always”, “sometimes”) typically identified some sort of institutional factor associated with their setting that prevented them from using different enrollment options. Here are a few quotations from respondents who did not feel autonomous in terms of making enrollment choices.

- We are tied to the institutional structure and calendar.
- We have not been able to create a system that will provide the optimum service for students, and work well with our college enrollment and faculty contract system; nor do we have the staff to implement such a system.
- Not all of our classes are set as fixed entry through the college. If we rewrote curriculum then it would be a possibility to change enrollment types.
- I cannot. The college systems do not support open registration. Every time a new student would enter, I would have to set up a new class. A teacher might have 30 classes for her class meeting 2 days a week for 12 weeks. The teacher's contract is class based. Calculating the number of credit hours a person is teaching is based on the classes assigned.

Research Response:

1. Research indicates that Illinois administrators' ways of determining enrollment type **are common to those of the field** in general.

- Studies indicate that programs seek to satisfy a common set of often conflicting needs:
 1. learners' need for **access and flexibility**
 2. need to provide **high quality instruction** leading to learning gains
 3. program's need to keep **enrollment numbers up** and classes filled
- **Program beliefs** about which enrollment type delivers the best outcomes for each particular need, coupled with which need is highest priority at the time, determines which type they select.

- Programs have reported that the **need to keep classes filled** and enrollment numbers up frequently **preempted all other factors** in determining the enrollment structure assigned to a class
- Program decisions on how to set up and operate programs are **heavily influenced by state and local institutional policies.**

Sources:

Beder 2001; Chisman & Crandall 2007; Comings et al 2006; Haupt 2006, 2007; Patterson & Mellard 2006; Povenmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; Reder and Strawn 2001; Smith & Hofer 2003.

SECTION V.

Advantages & Disadvantages to Enrollment Types

One of the main goals of the survey was to identify specific examples from local programs of advantages and disadvantages of enrollment types. The majority of programs identified open enrollment (50 responses) as their primary enrollment type. Fixed enrollment was the primary choice for 17 respondents and some of those indicated it in combination with either managed or open. This section discusses the responses from programs in Illinois as they provided specific advantages and disadvantages to open, fixed, and managed enrollment. Their comments are taken verbatim from the survey.

A research response follows each section and is specific to the type of enrollment discussed. Overall, the comments and issues from programs in Illinois are closely in line with current research. With regard to managed enrollment, it is evident there is a clear lack of information regarding managed enrollment among in Illinois.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

Survey Question: What do you see as the benefits to OPEN enrollment?

The majority of programs identified open enrollment as their main choice for enrollment type. Clearly the benefit of **flexibility for the student** was the overall theme. The ability to immediately serve the student and provide access to support services was mentioned numerous times. Increasing **units of instruction** was identified as an advantage to improved outcomes. **Individual instruction** was identified as a positive to better serve a student's educational level as well as their personal circumstances. Comments specific to these themes are included below:

- Open enrollment provides flexibility to students
 - Allows flexibility to meet the needs of adult learners with varying schedules
 - Students can come and go as they please. No one is turned away at any time of the year.
 - We are able to serve all students immediately.
 - Students have the opportunity to begin at a time that is suiting to their life situation. Students can get their level of instruction at multiple times and locations.
 - Open enrollment provides an opportunity for adult students who juggle multiple responsibilities - family, work, school, etc. Students can drop or transfer to another class at any time during the semester. Students

can register and start attending classes at any time during the semester.

- Open enrollment increases student head count which helps programs meet state expectations:
 - Every 7.5 hours of instruction are counted as .5 units. Open enrollment helps these units add up quickly.
 - You count all students with 7.5 hours. Students are served immediately instead of waiting for weeks.
 - We are able to serve more students throughout the fiscal year.
- Open enrollment fosters individualized education
 - students can work independently and move on to new work instead of waiting for classmates to catch up.

Survey Question: What do you see as the negatives to OPEN enrollment?

The major negatives to open enrollment are generally the same as the strengths. This is not contradictory; it is just a fact that the strengths and weakness go hand in hand. The **flexibility** that accommodates students is also a negative in the sense that students get the impression that it is OK to come in and out of programs and thus the enrollment practice does not build a sense of commitment to finishing the program and fosters a transient student population where the dynamics of the classroom are in a constant state of flux.

Instructional issues for teachers such as multi-level classrooms and the inability to complete curriculum were mentioned numerous times. Individualization is positive in that instruction meets students where they are at academically, but it is negative in that having so many students functioning at different levels in a classroom makes it hard to do any group instruction thus the teacher becomes fragmented. **Classroom management issues for teachers** including variance in class size and a disruptive classroom environment were listed throughout the comments as well. **Program management issues** related to staffing, the role of instructors and support staff, scheduling, paperwork, tracking, etc. Although open enrollment seemed more positive administratively in that it enables documenting a high number of students served, it also creates extra administrative work in tracking students and overall program management. Selected quotes from programs supporting the major themes are provided below:

- Issues related to flexibility:
 - Ongoing/ day to day class scheduling and class changes occupy much time for counselors and coordinators
 - Sometimes makes it too easy for students to "float" in and out of programs.
 - Students perceive they can come and go. Retention is difficult.
 - Very disruptive to the teacher and class instruction

- Issues related to individual instruction:
 - Instructors have to be able to teach at multiple levels of instruction.
 - Every class turns out to be multi-level even when scores are very similar. In addition to this natural accommodation to individual needs, adding new students during the session compounds the issue. The same is true for learners who seem to have a hard time catching up.

- Issues related to classroom management:
 - Classrooms and instruction difficult to manage with continual new enrollments; quality suffers.
 - No cohesive learning community among students, no way to build knowledge step by step through instructor directed lessons.

- Administrative challenges of open enrollment:
 - Staff must always be available for registration and placement services
 - More difficult to obtain post-testing
 - Students with 12 instructional hours will count toward NRS goals, whether or not they have just started instruction, completed a course, post-tested, passed the GED Test, etc.
 - Requires more staff time focusing on enrolling and doing paperwork instead of instruction or retention
 - It is extremely difficult for scheduling classes, arranging for faculty, coordinating our system with the college system, monitoring hours for testing, scheduling pre and post tests.

RESEARCH RESPONSE TO OPEN ENROLLMENT

Overall, Illinois administrators' comments about open enrollment closely parallel findings from research.

OPEN ENROLLMENT: Advantages According to Research

Adult education began with the mandate to serve the “least educated and most in need” adults. Research has confirmed that this potential group of students has serious, multiple barriers to accessing, attending and persisting in classes. (Beder 2001; Comings 1999, 2000; Reder & Strawn 2001). Open enrollment maximizes access to instruction for these learners.

No other enrollment type allows more learners access to educational opportunity. And once enrolled, no other type provides such flexibility in attendance.

Adult education learners “do not have poor attendance or lack persistence for frivolous or trivial reasons. Instead, they face an array of conflicting challenges, barriers, and responsibilities.” (Comings 1999). Allowing students to attend when

they are able, and miss class when they must, respects the multiple obligations, responsibilities and challenges the adult faces.

Adults must make an active decision and overcome significant barriers every time they attend an adult education class. “ABE and ESL learners often face hundreds if not thousands of hours of learning in order to achieve their goals.” (Comings 2006). They cannot put their lives on hold to attend every class and ignore other adult responsibilities. Challenges that may be managed for the short term may prove to be quite daunting when needing to be handled for many months or years of classes.

The structure of open enrollment classes presents less of a psychological barrier to some students to enrollment. Comments reported to researchers include that since open enrollment classes are not like the K-12 classes they had before, they don’t have to worry about falling behind the rest of the class if they don’t understand something, or not being able to “catch up” with the rest of the class if the need to miss some days (Beder 2005, 2006; Smith & Hofer 2003).

Open enrollment meets the common need of students who must drop out of classes, but plan to return when life circumstances stabilize. Research has used the term “stopouts” to describe this pattern, and argues for a new definition of persistence based on the student’s rather than the program’s schedule of goal completion. (Belzer 1998, Comings 1999).

Open enrollment allows these students to persist with little wait time when they are ready to re-enroll in classes. Students gain instruction, even if erratic. Research is showing that students frequently engage in self-study during breaks between classes. (Comings 1999; Reder & Strawn 2001). Programs gain attendance hours, at least for the “stop-in” times.

Programs, although using a great deal of open enrollment, are not necessarily doing so because of a belief in its educational value. “Directors and teachers had, by and large, mixed feelings about open enrollment, wanting to serve as many students possible, but wondering what this meant for the quality of teaching”. (Smith & Hofer 2003)

Programs are driven both by a “desire to be flexible to student’s attendance needs and by the program’s needs to keep student enrollment numbers up” (Smith & Hofer 2003). Open enrollment is the most effective enrollment structure for keeping classes filled and enrollment numbers high for reporting to funders.

OPEN ENROLLMENT: Disadvantages According to Research

Open enrollment’s greatest strengths are its open access and flexibility for students. But once in the classroom, these strengths can create challenges to teaching and learning. A disruptive environment of “enrollment and attendance

turbulence” is created when new students are constantly dropping in and out of class, placing conflicting demands on the teacher, and making it difficult for teachers and learners to focus on teaching and learning. (Sticht 1998; Smith & Hofer 2003)

When teachers in an open enrollment class do not know who will be in class on any given day, or how many new students may show up or drop out, planning and delivery of instruction is challenged. Constraints are placed on effective teaching and learning. (Taylor et al, 2005; Robinson-Geller, 2007).

Teachers are limited in their instructional choices. Direct, sequential, interactive instruction is seriously challenged. in open enrollment. Researchers have concluded that the structure “necessitates teaching individualized versus direct instruction.” (Strucker 2007). STAR programs are advised that it is not possible to deliver evidence-based reading instruction in an open enrollment environment.

The typical non-ESL classroom was found by researchers to be organized in “independent group instruction”. Students worked independently with a core curriculum of workbooks. Instruction was found to be mostly focused on the literal recall of factual information and discreet skills. (Beder et al 2001, 2005; Robinson-Geller & Lipnevich, 2006, 2007)

Many teachers report a diminished sense of professionalism and frustration in an open enrollment environment due to their inability to plan, follow a syllabus, and provide sequential instruction. (Robinson-Geller 2005; Strucker 2006, Smith & Hofer 2003).

In an individualized environment, teachers continually had to choose between “spending more time with fewer students in order to help each student understand skills more thoroughly; or spend less time with each student in order to keep more students moving forward” (Beder 2006, p.28 ; Robinson-Geller 2007) .

Where whole group instruction was used in open enrollment the teacher struggled with what content to teach. The need to review for those who had missed previous days conflicted with the need to move forward for those attending. (Smith & Hofer 2003; Strucker 2006, 2007) ”Instruction often takes place without a clear scope and sequence”. (Cronen et al 2007).

Open enrollment may produce disincentives to attendance when there are no ramifications to days missed, and when due to individualized instruction, one day is much like the next (Snow & Strucker 1999). Research suggests that the higher percentage of classes a student attends, the higher score he or she is likely to demonstrate on outcome testing. (Condelli 2007).

Attendance and persistence are highest when social support is greatest. High engagement was found to be built through active participation in teams or groups in class; learners assuming a leadership role in the class; and a high degree of learner interaction (Kegan 2001; Beder 2006; Comings1999, Ziegler & Durant 2001).

The development of social support, cohorts of learners, and learning communities are key to persistence. All depend upon a stable attending group of learners. Open enrollment classes have been found to have less cohesiveness and support among learners than other types of classes. (Beder & Medina 2001).

Open enrollment is associated with low learning gains. According to the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the open enrollment policies of many programs, along with the relatively low retention and attendance of adult ESL students, interfere with the continuous level of instruction needed to acquire literacy and language skills. (Cronen et al 2007).

With open enrollment, large numbers of students may be served. However, with the erratic attendance and persistence patterns typical of open enrollment, the program's goal of satisfying federal requirements regarding funding guidelines about sufficient intensity and duration of instruction may not have been met (Comings 2006)

FIXED ENROLLMENT

Survey Question: What do you see as the benefits to FIXED enrollment?

As expected, the benefits of fixed enrollment are basically the mirror image opposite of the drawbacks of open enrollment. Fixed enrollment benefits instruction and learning because teaching can be sequential and learners can progress as a group. Finally, students may be committed to their learning because they foresee "start" and "end" dates for the courses they take. One respondent commented that fixed was essential for VOC classes, because it would be unworkable for people to start at different times of the year given the sequential nature of the curriculum.

The instructional issues identified in program comments related to instructor issues included curriculum planning, providing a better quality of instruction and providing instruction that builds on concepts. Relationship building with students was mentioned as a definite benefit to a fixed enrollment classroom. Additionally other **student issues** identified included better transitioning to the real world, students working together, goal attainment and attendance. Fixed enrollment from a **program management perspective** was deemed as easier to manage, emphasizing scheduling and tracking as more predictable.

Below are select quotes documenting the perceptions that the strengths of fixed enrollment:

- Easier for teachers to plan their curriculum. Less disruption within the class. More consistent student progress.

- FIXED enrollment provides a learning structure and calendar that gives a learning momentum to the class. It lends itself to a type of organization that promotes learning. It provides time to develop specific skills and skill foundations.
- It allows the teacher to plan quality lessons that build on each one and it allows students to build trust with other classmates. I think it encourages retention and students make more learning gains.
- It would also lessen the burden on the instructor. Students also might show more gains on testing, as the teacher can focus on a fixed group of students rather than an ever-changing one.
- Student skill levels are more homogenous. Faculty can develop curriculum for all students.
- Students form learning communities with other students.
- Testing is easier to schedule and hours easier to monitor.
- I think fixed enrollment is easier for data entry because all students enter at the same time and there aren't any exceptions.
- Easier data entry. Easier classroom management.
- Fixed enrollment might make students take their enrollment more seriously and improve attendance.
- The instructor and the program is aware of the number of students who should be in the classroom, the material to be covered each day and has some presumption of commitment.

Survey Question: What do you see as the negatives to FIXED enrollment?

Just as the benefits of fixed enrollment are basically the mirror image opposite of the drawbacks of open enrollment, the comments made in regard to fixed enrollment highly reflected issues focusing on **student need for flexibility**. Respondents repeatedly expressed the view that fixed enrollment does not accommodate the reality of the lives led by students in adult education. Telling students to wait until a future enrollment period before starting their education and not accommodating students whose work or child care responsibilities interfere with attendance would inevitably lead to lower numbers in the program and therefore a reduction in funding. **Program specific disadvantages** included the loss of numbers and the difficulty with utilizing staff time for classes.

Below are select quotes documenting the perceptions of the negatives of fixed enrollment:

- Students who miss the registration/placement date(s) are placed on a waiting list until the next session starts --- likely to lose students.
- Students lose interest when enrollment delayed
- The fact that students must be enrolled by the third day. This would be very difficult with our population.
- Doesn't provide flexibility with changing work and life situations.

- There is little flexibility to enter new students in a class if the enrollment time is over - and students are not always allowed back to a class if they have a health or job conflict for a short time. And if a class attendance dwindles, there is no opportunity to serve those who may be on a waiting list after a certain time period.
- Many students would not come back if they couldn't enroll when they initially want to. The flexibility would be gone.
- The big negative to FIXED enrollment is that classes may end up with very few students - underusing instructor time and talent and denying learners the opportunity to form a learning community and learn from each other.
- After having to drop students for non-attendance after 3 class days, and asking them to wait for the next session, we feel students would lose interest, or find another program to take them. We have always felt that it is important to enroll the student when they are eager to begin. We do not like to put students on waiting lists. The students tend to move, have disconnected phones, or have allowed other things to get in the way of their education by the time we are able to contact them.
- We constantly worry about whether a student will return so that we can capture a post-test, plus we often have to remove students who miss too many hours prior to mid-term. This also affects the funding.

RESEARCH RESPONSE TO FIXED ENROLLMENT

Overall, Illinois' administrators' comments about fixed enrollment closely parallel findings from research.

FIXED ENROLLMENT: Major Advantages According to Research

Fixed enrollment would seem to be the answer to many of the disadvantages of open enrollment. Since all students who are going to be part of the class have entered by the first few class meetings, the makeup of the class is known by both the teacher and by the other learners.

Fixed enrollment allows for optimal educational planning and delivery circumstances. The structure does not limit the type of instruction that can be delivered, so direct, sequential, group instruction of the kind found effective for adult learners can be delivered. STAR programs are urged to implement their instruction in managed or fixed enrollment environments. (Strucker 2007).

Since teachers in fixed enrollment classes have the same group of students to work with throughout the class, they are not limited to individualized instruction, but can have group activities, project-based instruction, learner involvement,

sequential, direct group instruction, and choose from the full spectrum of educational delivery methods appropriate for the particular group of students.

The teacher can plan instruction and follow lesson plans since the student body remains constant throughout the class. Teachers can continue to move forward in instruction unlike the open enrollment teachers who felt forced to choose between the need to constantly review for returning students and the need to move forward for persisting students. (Robinson-Geller 2005; Beder et al 2006).

The focus of a fixed enrollment class can be on curriculum development and instruction. It is not distracted by enrollment turbulence.

Students do not have to deal with the enrollment turbulence of the open enrollment classroom, and profit from the focus of the teacher and instruction. It is a stable educational environment.

The teacher in a fixed enrollment class can plan instruction so that each day missed is an important day missed. Incentive to attend should thereby be increased. And research suggests that the percentage of class days attended positively affects learning gain. (Condelli 2007).

Learners in fixed enrollment classes have the necessary characteristics to develop cohort groups. They enter together, and share a common goal and commitment. (Drago-Severson 2001; Kegan 2001). Since there is a stable, attending group of learners, a learning community can develop that forms strong, supportive bonds. This has been shown by research to increase persistence and learning gains. (Beder et al 2006; Kegan 2001; Walker & Strawn 2004; Ziegler and Durant 2001).

Research indicates that high levels of learner engagement increase persistence. Engagement can be built through interactive learning, leadership opportunities within the class, and building bonds among learners. (Beder et al 2006; Ziegler & Durant 2001). Due to the stability of enrollment, these are all possible in a fixed enrollment class.

Research on persistence indicates the importance of learners seeing the progress they are making towards their goals. (Comings 2000; Malitz & Ponder 2008). In a fixed enrollment class with a syllabus and sequential instruction, learners see movement. With ongoing assessment and feedback, learners can see their progress towards goals.

The structure of a fixed enrollment class is the same as that of postsecondary. Transition is therefore eased for those who succeed in the structure. (Crandall & Shepard 2004; Cronan 2004).

Adult education programs at community colleges find fixed enrollment classes “fit” neatly into the institutional credit hour system. (Walker and Strawn 2004).

FIXED ENROLLMENT: Major Disadvantages According to Research

Fixed enrollment allows teachers and students to focus on instruction and learning, but it is at the cost of access and flexibility. Fixed enrollment provides the least access to educational opportunity of any of the enrollment types.

Many potential adult education students are unable to commit to long term regular class schedules due to part time erratic work schedules, shift work, child care issues, and other barriers. For others, regular attendance is challenging due to health, work, or family issues. (Beder 1990; Comings 1888; Reder & Strawn 1998; Robinson-Geller 2007; Tolbert 2005).

For many students, barriers make it impossible to make it to registration on the few days scheduled. For others, a search for finding solutions to reliable child care, transportation or other barriers, for example, may reveal that short term offers are made, but a long term commitment from a friend or family member of several months is not forthcoming. Therefore, they do not enroll. (Beder 1990; Long 2001; Robinson-Geller 2007; Tolbert 2005.)

Agencies often refer learners to programs throughout the year, many mandating that they “get their GED” or “learn English” and report back to their caseworkers or parole officers within a designated period of time with progress, or face serious penalties. In a fixed enrollment environment, these individuals may have to wait many weeks or months before a class begins in which they can enroll.

A barrier to enrollment reported by research includes the fact that fixed enrollment classes “look like” the K-12 class structures from which they came. They report fearing they will fall behind the rest of the class and not be able to catch up. This can become a barrier both to enrollment and to attendance once enrolled. (Beder 2005).

The long term nature (usually several months) of fixed enrollment classes requires long term persistence of the learner. Often, large numbers of students enroll in a fixed enrollment class, but high attrition sets in after several weeks. Research suggests this high attrition is at least partially due to the reality of the complexity and multiple life challenges of the educationally and economically in need adult student’s life and the inflexibility of the fixed enrollment structure. (Beder 2000; Comings 1888; Reder & Strawn 1998).

Since the learners have formed strong bonds in the beginning of the class, as attrition sets in and students see their peers stop coming to class, the loss of the factors supporting persistence is especially keen. (Comings 1999, 2007; Drago-Severson et al; 2001; Kegan 2001).

Often, by the end of the term, there may only be a handful of students left attending a fixed enrollment class. The number of students who persist long enough to post test and make measurable gains for NRS reports may be quite small. The program goal of satisfying the federal funding guidelines about sufficient intensity and duration of instruction may not be met. (Comings 2006).

MANAGED ENROLLMENT

Survey Question: What do you see as the benefits to MANAGED enrollment?

There were two major themes of responses. The first was simply “don’t know”. A large number of respondents either indicated N/A for “non-applicable” because they do not have prior experience with managed enrollment, or “don’t know” because they feel they have no basis to provide an opinion.

The other major theme was a general optimism that managed enrollment might provide some of the benefits of both open and fixed enrollment, while minimizing the drawbacks of open or fixed. Several individuals described managed enrollment as a “compromise” between fixed and open. Many individuals appeared to be open to piloting managed enrollment, and several respondents had used it and found the model yielded some benefits.

- The quotes below are representative of the large number of respondents who indicated they “didn’t know” what the benefits of managed enrollment might be.
 - Not experienced this type of enrollment.
 - We would like the answer to this question ourselves. We have never even thought of using this, as we know little or nothing about it.

- The quotes below are representative of the respondents who indicated a cautious optimism that managed enrollment might capture the benefits of open and fixed approaches, while minimizing the drawbacks.
 - For me, MANAGED enrollment is a healthy compromise in that it provides a beginning, end, and therefore structure for learning, but it addresses the reality of recruitment and retentions - especially for programs who work with special population.
 - It would provide some flexibility, yet maintain a somewhat predictable flow of paperwork and administrative follow up.
 - The benefit to the managed enrollment that we use is that the enrollment appears to me open, however our classes are fixed in that we enroll students every Monday. These classes have a fixed beginning and ending date. This allows us to capture almost every student for some units of instruction. The benefit is that any student wanting to attend can do so at any time throughout the semester.

- Managed enrollment might be a good compromise between open and fixed enrollment. Students would know that they would still have the opportunity to enroll on a regular basis. Teachers would know exactly when to expect new students.
- Managed enrollment may be the best compromise if open enrollment is eliminated. However, I don't think the outcomes will differ much from open enrollment.
- I am very interested in this model for ABE/ASE - but we need time to consider the impact prior to making a change. Within the community colleges, we need to formally request changes to the courses to make them variable credit, figure out what that means in terms of how we run contracts, etc. However, I think we would definitely maximize enrollment by moving to this model.

Survey Question: What do you see as the negatives to MANAGED enrollment?

As with the question focusing on the benefits to managed enrollment, a large number of respondents simply indicated they did not know, presumably because they didn't have experience or information specific to managed enrollment. Perspectives on potential negatives were diverse, which some suggesting that the model would have the same problem as fixed enrollment, in that implementing the managed model would reduce flexibility and shut some students out of adult education. Others felt it would have similar problems to open enrollment, with the administrative inconvenience of regular enrollment of students displacing time for instruction being a major concern. Several individuals mentioned the perceived administrative complexity of managed enrollment as a possible drawback.

- The quotes below are representative of the large number of respondents who indicated they "didn't know" what the drawbacks of managed enrollment might be.
 - Have no reference point
 - I don't have that much information.
 - We would like further information and technical assistance on perhaps using this type of enrollment.
- The quotes below are representative of the respondents who indicated concerns that managed enrollment might not change the negatives associated with open and fixed approaches.
 - Some negatives from both fixed and open - some delays in accessing services and some challenges with new students entering the class with some frequency

- Paperwork, recruiting new students constantly, orienting students more often. More work contacting students and getting them there.
- When a large group of new students begin at the same time, it can be stressful to the other students and to the teachers.
- Managed enrollment would make for a more complex system to follow. Students could get confused, especially ESL students. Enrollment dates for new students might not match students' schedules.
- Constantly re-naming classes after 4 or 8 week class ends; If miss open enrollment time period, student must wait 'til next enrollment date - may not return.
- Managed enrollment is very difficult from an administrative perspective. Class set up is a challenge. Since I don't see many benefits of managed enrollment vs. open enrollment, the administrative challenges seem unnecessary.
- The same problem of losing students who might re-enter but can't because of enrollment rules.
- Registration would need to be ongoing - no down time for this operational area in our department. And, teachers would still be challenged to teach in "chunks" that would allow for new students to enter at certain markers without being left behind.
- also too limiting - for students and scheduling mostly. Performance may improve, as long as retention is high, however if enrollment and units of instruction suffer, so does the budget.

RESEARCH RESPONSE TO MANAGED ENROLLMENT

Illinois administrators' responses generally indicate a lack of knowledge about managed enrollment and its advantages and disadvantages according to research

Background information:

Managed enrollment is a locally developed model developed around state parameters. Common characteristics include:

- Periodically scheduled entry points into existing classes at educationally valid points
- Or short self-contained and sequential modules (3-6 week classes)
- Scheduled group intake before class begins, outside of class (intake, assessment, and orientation)
- Attendance requirements

MANAGED ENROLLMENT: Major Advantages According to Research

The structure of managed enrollment combines the strengths from both open and fixed enrollment while minimizing their challenges. It is meant to recognize and allow for the adult learner's life realities and challenges, while providing

instruction in a sequential, stable, educational environment likely to produce learning results.

One of the major advantages of managed enrollment is its locally designed nature. Its exact structure is developed to meet local goals and needs.

The provider no longer has to make the forced choice between “whether it is better to serve as many students as possible and be as flexible as possible, or serve fewer students with more focus on curriculum and sequential instruction” (Smith & Hofer 2003, p. 51).

The local program decides just how much access to allow; how long students are expected to persist and how many absences can be allowed; how the class will be structured; and how the students will meet their goals if they enroll and persist to the end of the class.

Enrollment turbulence is controlled or eliminated entirely depending upon how the program structures new enrollments. At minimum, intake, assessment, and orientation are handled in groups outside of class, freeing up intake staff time for more retention and support work.

When new students do enter a class, the teacher is expecting them, has information about them, and has prepared the class and instruction for a more optimal entry for the students.

Orientation is required of all learners. Research has shown orientation to be a major predictor of retention. (Kegan 2001; Comings 2006; Taylor 2005). Learners arrive in class already as cohorts of learners. Cohorts have been found to significantly increase retention, persistence, and learning gains. (Drago-Severson 2001; Kegan 2001).

Unlike open and fixed enrollment, there are usually attendance requirements in managed enrollment classes. This provides an incentive to attendance higher than in either open or fixed enrollment. Research suggests that the percent of classes a student attends leads to increased learning. (Condelli 2007).

Like open enrollment, managed enrollment accommodates the need for learners to “stop out” of program instruction for periods of time and come back when life circumstances allow, without having to wait the long terms fixed enrollment would dictate. (Belzer 1998; Comings 1999).

Managed enrollment, like fixed enrollment, allows for optimal educational planning and delivery circumstances. The structure does not limit the type of instruction that can be delivered, so direct, sequential, group, instruction of the kind found effective for adult learners can be delivered (Robinson-Geller & Lipnevich 2006). STAR programs are urged to implement their instruction in managed or fixed enrollment environments. (Strucker 2007).

Beder's study of 598 classes in 12 states found that teachers in managed enrollment classes were more interactive with their students than those of open enrollment classes, used more direct instruction, collaborative methods, and the teaching of higher level thinking skills. (Beder et al 2001, 2005; Robinson-Geller & Lipnevich, 2006).

Managed enrollment requires a focus on curriculum and instruction. With attendance requirements and learning modules (when applicable), the curriculum and lesson plans are carefully designed so that learning goals can be achieved within the structure of the class. Students can see progress towards goals, which is an important factor in persistence (Comings 2000; Malitz & Ponder 2008).

Managed enrollment classes can be structured like fixed enrollment to fit seamlessly into the postsecondary education and training system. Some programs have made changes to managed enrollment primarily to ease transition. Oregon made such a decision more than twenty years ago primarily for such a reason. (Walker & Strawn 2004).

Researchers have found that managed enrollment increases attendance, and decreases attrition. (Beder 2006; Chisman 2007 Post 790; Polis 2006; Povernmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; Smith & Hofer 2003; Ziegler & Durant 2001).

States and most programs moving from open to managed enrollment are reporting anecdotal information that they are seeing increased attendance, persistence and outcomes to report to funders. Often reduced enrollments accompany these. Many states are moving from enrollment based to outcome based funding, so the outcomes are positive for both learners and programs. (Hyzer & Haupt 2006; Povernmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; see State Profiles, this report.)

Managed enrollment is being found to result in increased learning outcomes for programs. (Chisman 2007 :Condelli 2003; Hyzer & Haupt 2006; Povernmire 2006, Ramirez, 2006; Strucker 2007, and State Profiles this report).

Managed enrollment has direct benefits for programs. Managed enrollment helps programs keep classes from emptying at the end of each session, thereby gaining the program more post tests and outcome gains. Due to increased attendance and persistence, enrollment hours are increased. With an increase focus on curriculum, teaching, and learning, plus an increased attendance, learning gains should be higher. The program may have a better chance of meeting the federal funding guidelines regarding intensity and duration of instruction. (Comings 2007)

MANAGED ENROLLMENT: Major Disadvantages According to Research

Managed enrollment has been developed out of individual program frustrations with the limitations and negative effects of open and fixed enrollment. It is

formed out of taking the strengths from open enrollment and fixed enrollment, fitting them into individual program environments and population needs, and creating customized class by class answers to needs. This is one of its greatest strengths, but it also creates its greatest challenges.

The success of managed enrollment lies in local program planning and systematic, data-driven development. Therefore, it will have varying levels of success. (Povenmire 2006; Hyzer&Haupt 2006, 2007; Ramirez 2006).

Change requires program wide commitment. Structural changes will be made in the classroom, curriculum, intake, and orientation, as well as in determining how many weeks a class will last and when new students will enter. Managed enrollment will require initial program investment in terms of staff time and effort to plan and make program changes. (Hyzer &Haupt2006, 2007; Polis 2006; Povenmire 2006; Ramirez 2006).

Programs considering managed enrollment often fear loss of funding because they believe it will result in fewer enrollments than open enrollment would have produced. Initial results have not indicated this, but there have not been enough research based pilot programs documented to be able to report whether or not this is a valid fear. Many states have negated this fear by moving their funding mechanisms from enrollment based to outcome based ones. (See state profiles this report.).

Some programs have reported stable or increased enrollments or attendance, or report having to get used to fewer students at the end of the term, even if their attendance and learning gains were higher. (Povenmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; State profiles this report).

Researchers suggest that funders could put forth a hold harmless period for programs piloting managed enrollment in order to gather data. Some states have implemented this strategy.

Concern has been raised that managed enrollment does not meet the needs of the “most in need” adult learners with multiple life challenges whose lives will not allow them to commit to a stable schedule of attendance. Managed enrollment attempts to alleviate this by shortening the commitment time of each class. By shortening a class length to as few as 3-6 weeks, many learners are able to experience successful completion, build self-efficacy, and enroll in another short term commitment.

Still, there will be some who need more flexibility than managed enrollment offers. Researchers suggest providing an open enrollment option or other drop-in type learning situation on-site alongside managed enrollment for those who are unable to commit to more scheduled classes.

SECTION VI

Preferences and Impact as Identified by Illinois Programs

This section provides information specific to questions about the preferences of programs for each type of enrollment and the impact of enrollment type on programs. Administrators were willing to share their thoughts and it is important to relay their experiences as their insight is valuable to identifying next steps and providing ground work to others interested in the impact of enrollment to the field of adult education.

Additionally, this section includes information from an input session conducted during the Spring Administrators' Meeting in April 2008. A group of 18 administrators joined together to dialogue about the topic of enrollment. The session focused on four main questions. Their thoughts and concerns are outlined later in this section.

Survey Question:

What type(s) of enrollment (open, fixed, managed) do you or would you prefer using in your program, and why?

Due to the circumstances and demographics of programs, there is not a clear consensus among adult education administrators in Illinois on which enrollment model is best. Programs seem to prefer indicating the method they feel best serves their students, but are cautious and may change enrollment types due to the need to meet numbers. Every approach (i.e., open, fixed, managed) and combination of approaches has its advocates. Several suggested that different approaches may work best in different parts of the State (rural versus urban) and for different adult education programs. Here are some supporting quotations:

- I would imagine a program should have a combination of classes to accommodate all situations.
- I think it's important to allow for flexibility and remember that the needs of students and programs in southern and central IL are different than those in Chicago. The needs of rural areas vs. areas of high population are different. While the ideal may be fixed enrollment, leveled classes, this just may not be feasible in certain areas.
- Each type is important within the mix of classes.
- We use open for lack of enough information of using the other two options. If we knew more, we might make changes.

However, despite the lack of a consensus, about half of the administrators expressed a preference for **open enrollment**. The major advantage of open enrollment is the flexibility for students and proponents of this approach believe it outweighs any disadvantages. Here are some selected quotes from those favoring open enrollment:

- We have used open enrollment exclusively for many years. Although, it does create attendance issues and classroom management issues for instructors, it does provide the Adult Ed population of students with the flexibility needed to meet student needs.
- Open enrollment...provides the most flexibility to students. If students have to wait to begin class, they may become discouraged and not return.
- Open Enrollment is preferred. Allows us to serve more students when they are ready to begin instruction. Open enrollment is more flexible to fit student schedules, needs, goals, etc.

Although open enrollment appears to be more widely used, **fixed enrollment** has its advocates. Proponents of fixed enrollment focused their comments on the quality education and quality instructional outcomes that can be achieved. Fixed enrollment is especially perceived as appropriate for programs which build on prior learning and require sequential instruction (e.g., VOC).

- We actually like the idea of fixed enrollment, especially since testing is a priority of the ICCB. We would have much more control over pre/post testing, better post rates, and possibly more learning gains.
- We prefer the fixed enrollment system primarily because we feel it best facilitates student learning.
- The fixed enrollment model that is currently used in this program has produced outstanding student retention and performance results. Also, research also indicates that the fixed enrollment model is the most effective.
- I prefer fixed, because I think it is easier to manage from a data standpoint and an educational standpoint for the continuity of the instruction.
- For vocational fixed allows the student to obtain the state issued license that requires 15 hours of attendance.

Managed enrollment appears to be less widely used than either fixed or open. As stated in previous sections, it is clear programs are less familiar with managed enrollment. However, it does have advocates who believe it is serving their programs well by drawing on the strengths of fixed and open approaches.

- Managed - because the program has flexibility to meet student needs, but in a controlled environment. Managed enrollment also keeps the program aligned with institutional enrollment reporting for purposes of budget and resource allocation.
- We use managed enrollment. In doing so, we have structured time for teachers to teach and learners to learn specific skills and/or competencies. At the same time, we place new students in the class at certain intervals to avoid empty chairs.

- Managed. Because it allows for regularly scheduled enrollment which allows us to enroll students for a set amount of time (good for clear expectations). It also streamlines the amount of time staff have to spend on paperwork, testing, etc.
- Managed--to serve as many students as possible with some flexibility while allowing for program quality and continuity

Finally, many respondents indicated they use **a combination of approaches** based on program type. Also, several respondents indicated a willingness to consider using managed enrollment for at least some of their programs, which suggests that adult education program administrators agree that managed enrollment has the potential to diminish (or at least moderate) some of the drawbacks of pure fixed and open approaches. Here are some quotes from those using or considering using a combination of approaches.

- Our Certified Nurse Assistant and Food Service Sanitation Manager's classes are Fixed entry. All our ABE, ASE, ABE/ASE, and computer vocational are open enrollment. We prefer to use both depending upon specific class.
- Fixed and managed. Fixed works very well for our ESL classes. With more than 3,000 ESL students, open enrollment is not an option. We are considering fixed for ABE/GED but have not come up with a way to make it work. We need to investigate managed enrollment.
- I'd prefer to keep open enrollment, or perhaps try a managed enrollment - because our program and population needs the flexibility of being able to enroll new students throughout the year, as well as re-enroll students who've been unable to attend for a time.
- I'm quite sure that we would prefer to continue with open enrollment. However, managed enrollment could be worth looking at. The key is that a student would not need to wait long before getting served.
- Open and managed. We think it's important to have a start and end date so that teachers and students have a set curriculum and schedule to follow. The flexibility of open enrollment is vital to be able to serve the needs of newly arrived refugees and low-income immigrants.

Program Preferences for Enrollment Types

Research Response:

Both research and states indicate that programs historically began using open enrollment as the vehicle for structuring enrollment and classes. Programs resist changing from open enrollment if their funding is based on performance or enrollment. Programs tend to believe in open enrollment's ability to meet

student's need for access and flexibility. However, programs which have tried both open and managed enrollment tend to prefer managed.

Sources: *Patterson and Mellard 2006; Polis 2006; Povenmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; Smith and Hofer 2003; Also, see State Profiles, this report.*

BENEFITS FROM ENROLLMENT TYPES

The survey requested programs to identify from a list of characteristics what they believed to be the best type of enrollment. It is evident from the response percentages, that the enrollment types individuals chose were the ones with which they were most familiar. It is interesting to note in the research findings below, that there could be some misunderstanding regarding the impact open enrollment has on programs and students. These responses also indicate the lack of knowledge specific to managed enrollment held by Illinois administrators.

Survey Question:

What type of enrollment do you believe to be generally best for the following characteristics?

Participants were able to choose open, fixed or managed for each factor listed below. (not prioritized)

Teaching planned lessons Having the best access to classes Producing more pre/post test Promoting group curriculum building by teachers Promoting project-based learning Promoting good attendance Better retention Having the most direct instruction	Keeping classes filled Building learning communities General teacher satisfaction Generating enrollment hours Generating faster student progress Producing more learning gains Producing higher learner satisfaction Teaching higher level cognitive skills Increasing persistence
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Greatest percentage is listed as #1.

OPEN ENROLLMENT TOP TEN ANSWERS

1. Access to class (95.9%)
2. Keeping classes filled (82.2%)
3. Generating enrollment hours (63.9%)
4. Producing higher learner satisfaction (60.6%)
5. Promoting good attendance(54.3%)
6. Generating faster student progress (50%)
7. Better retention (47.9%)
8. Producing more learning gains(44.3%)
9. Producing more pre/post tests (41.7%)
10. Increasing persistence(40.6%)

FIXED ENROLLMENT TOP TEN ANSWERS

1. Teaching planned lessons (84.9%)
2. Direct Instruction (72.2%)
3. Project based learning (74.6%)
4. Promoting group curriculum (71.8%)
5. Teaching higher level cognitive skills (69.6%)
6. Teacher satisfaction (65.7%)
7. Building learning communities (58.6%)
8. Promoting learning gains (50%)
9. Producing more pre/post tests (48.6%)
10. Increasing persistence (46.4%)

MANAGED ENROLLMENT TOP TEN ANSWERS

1. Project based learning (34.3%)
2. Promoting group curriculum (33.8%)
3. Increasing persistence (33.3%)
4. Higher learner satisfaction (31%)
5. Resulting in better retention (29.6%)
6. Building learning communities (28.6%)
7. Producing more pre/post tests (27.8%)
8. Teaching planned lessons (26%)
9. Promoting good attendance (22.0%)
10. Most direct instruction (19.4%)

TOP TEN OVERALL

Overall percentages used for this.

O=open F=fixed

1. Access to class (O)
2. teaching planned lessons (f)
3. keeping classes filled(O)
4. project based learning (f)
5. Direct instruction (f)
6. group curriculum building (f)
7. teaching higher level cognitive skills (f)
8. teacher satisfaction (f)
9. Generating enrollment hours (O)
10. learner satisfaction (O)

RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response *to the Survey Question: What type of enrollment do you believe to be generally best for the following characteristics?*

Illinois Administrators generally agreed with research on the major benefits of open and fixed enrollments. Their unfamiliarity with managed enrollment is manifest in their responses regarding its benefits.

Findings from Research:

1. Access to classes.

Open enrollment has the most access of all types; fixed the least. Managed enrollment can have almost as much access as open depending upon how local programs structure classes and entry.

2. Teaching planned lessons.

Fixed or managed. Depending upon how programs structure their managed enrollment classes, they would be able to teach planned lessons just as in fixed enrollment classes.

3. Keeping classes filled.

Open enrollment has the most ability to enroll new students every day, but the argument for managed enrollment is that due to shorter class sessions, there will be less attrition, therefore classes will be fuller overall. Research supports this theory.

4. Project based learning.

Fixed or managed. Depending upon how programs structure managed enrollment classes, and due to their attendance requirements, managed enrollment classes could implement project based learning as well as fixed.

5. Direct instruction.

Fixed or managed. Direct instruction is the expectation in managed enrollment classes.

6. Group curriculum building.

Fixed or managed. Managed enrollment requires group curriculum building due to redesigning of the program to meet local needs and goals.

7. Teaching higher level cognitive skills

Fixed or managed. Studies have shown that managed enrollment classes teach twice the amount of higher level cognitive skills than open enrollment classes.

8. Teacher satisfaction

Fixed or managed. Studies indicate that it is the enrollment turbulence of open enrollment resulting in the inability to plan and deliver instruction in a sequential

way that is at the root of most reported teacher dissatisfaction. Studies have not compared fixed and managed enrollment classes.

9. Generating enrollment hours

Probably managed enrollment. Researchers indicate persistence is higher in managed enrollment. States that have begun to use managed enrollment have anecdotally reported decreased enrollments but increased persistence and attendance hours, so overall more hours to report but fewer individual students.

10. Learner satisfaction

The few research studies existing have compared open and managed enrollment only; learners have usually favored managed.

Sources:

Beder et al 2001, 2005, 2006; Chisman & Crandall 2007; Comings 1999, 2000, 2006, 2007; Condelli 2002,2003; Hyzer & Haupt 2006, 2007; Patterson & Mellard 2006; Povenmire 2006; Ramirez 2006; Reder and Strawn 2001; Robinson-Geller 2005, 2007; Strucker, 2007; Taylor 2005; TESOL 2000; Tolbert 2005; Wrigley 2003; Ziegler & Durant, 2001.

Survey Question:

Please describe the impact and outcomes that the use of specific enrollment types have had at your program.

Respondents who used different enrollment types **reported positive outcomes for the type they were using.** In a few cases, comments were provided about types of enrollment that were tried but did not work out too well. The outcomes reported regarding enrollment types were closely aligned with the advantages that could be anticipated with each model. For example, open enrollment enabled lots of people to access adult education, fixed enrollment resulted in positive student progress, and managed enrollment mitigated against the drawbacks of fixed and open approaches. Selected quotes describing the impact and outcomes of different enrollment type are provided below:

- Open enrollment has worked well with our teachers and students because of the large rural area (4,000 square miles, all or parts of 15 counties) that our program serves. Our teachers are aware of the need to post test students and make arrangements to do so if they know the student may be leaving class before the end of the semester. As a result our post test rate has increased from 20% to over 50% in the past 3 years.
- Our youthful student population is not good about waiting. With open enrollment, we can do registrations twice weekly and get students started into classes. Many students need immediate results, like getting enrolled in the program and starting class the same day and almost as soon as they decide to enroll. We have used open enrollment for so many years that staff are trained and

fully prepared to remain flexible for new students, engage new students in their classrooms and build a sense of community. Entire group learning occurs, as does individualized and small group instruction. Outcomes are satisfactory.

- Fixed enrollment in the ESL classes has resulted in the successful management of a large number of students and improvement in learning gain and post-test rates. Open entry in ABE/GED has resulted in an ungainly workload for our ABE/GED staff and low post-test rates along with poor results in learning gains.
- The difficulties of open enrollment became clear when NRS standards emerged. Our ABE/GED percentages were dreadful because many students could not sustain attendance from beginning to end. At this point, we began the use of fixed enrollment - allowing a group of students to enter the class at two week intervals for the first half of the class. No one was admitted after the half-way point. We do not see this as ideal, but necessary. We have had to find volunteers to assist multiple learning groups within a class and in some instances use a team-teaching approach. We have seen improvement in our post/test rate and in learning gains - especially point gains. Our ESL (to date no ICCB funds from ESL pot) classes are more stable, but we have used fixed enrollment also - not as many students.
- Tried fixed did not work.
- Using the fixed entry system has had an impact on enrollment because of student inconsistent attendance. If open entry or managed enrollment was possible then enrollment hours might increase.
- Fixed enrollment gives our instructors the opportunity to plan ahead, have elaborate lesson plans, and plan activities in the classroom, including technology access. I feel that this has helped to maintain our retention of students in their attendance, which helps as we offer a full-time, 25 hour per week program.
- Managed as opposed to open has improved quality of instruction and outcomes with a small sacrifice of convenience. Not being able to just come and go improves the student's perception that they need to commit to the program.
- We tried to use managed enrollment a couple of years ago but found that too many students were kept waiting when they could have been working on gains and when we took students in as a group the rest of the school seemed troubled by all the new students and complained about us taking them in.

Impact and Outcomes of Enrollment Types

Research Response:

Research has found that the structure of enrollment has many impacts on students, teachers, the program, and instruction which lead to impacts on outcomes.

Open Enrollment.

Many impacts are created by open enrollment's tendency to result in frequent entry and exit of students into a class. These are lessened as entry and exit are more managed.

- **Impacts on teachers.** Teachers often report frustration in not being able to plan and deliver sequential lessons and see student progress. Teachers in individualized classrooms often have to choose between giving more in-depth help to fewer students or providing less time with each one but reaching more students.
- **Impacts on students.** Students have the highest amount of access and flexibility in attendance in open enrollment than in any other type. However, this also results in a high rate of absenteeism, low levels of persistence, and low motivation to attend each individual day of class. In many individualized classes, students often disengage during "wait time" while the teacher is busy helping others. However, students can have more control over what they study in an individualized model.
- **Impacts on instruction.** Due to the fluid attendance, teachers have less choice in types of instruction in open enrollment than in other types. There is much reliance on "individualized group instruction" where the teacher acts more as a resource than providing direct instruction. Research has found that more basic level and less higher level thinking skills are taught in open enrollment than in the same level of managed enrollment classes.
- **Impacts on outcomes.** Open enrollment allows students to "stop out" of classes when life circumstances dictate, and to "drop back in" when they improve. Students do not have to wait until another class begins. New research has shown that students tend to continue studying on their own outside of class during this time, so that all prior learning is not lost. However, the stop and start patterns of many open enrollment students is not optimal for sequential skill learning and many do not make much measurable progress. In addition, capturing post-tests in this environment is quite difficult since many students leave unannounced.
- **Impacts on programs.** Open enrollment allows programs to serve many more students than the other enrollment types. However, actual attendance hours per student is often not high. Intensity and duration of instruction per student may not be up to NRS standards. As mentioned before, capturing post tests is difficult, so numbers reported to NRS may be low. Intake, data, and counseling staff are taken up daily with tasks associated with entering students.

Fixed Enrollment

- **Impacts on teachers.** Fixed enrollment begins as an optimal situation for teachers. They can focus on curriculum and content. They know who their students are and what their skill levels are before they begin the course. The last part of the course can be discouraging if attrition sets in and the student body becomes small.
- **Impacts on students.** Fixed enrollment provides the least access and flexibility of all the enrollment types. Since many adult education students have little experience with what it means to commit to a long term course, and many have multiple challenges and barriers to continual attendance, students frequently find themselves unprepared to be able to make it to class every class session for the full length of the course. They fall behind in content, become discouraged, and drop out; or drop out due to inability to attend consistently. For those who succeed in the structure, it is a good practice for a college course since most are structured as fixed enrollment courses.
- **Impacts on instruction.** Fixed enrollment provides the most convenient instructional packaging for the program. Instruction is packaged as a standard course. Any instructional technique can be used as is appropriate for the content and students.
- **Impacts on outcomes.** Students who complete a fixed enrollment course tend to make some measurable learning gains. Post tests are scheduled at the end of the course and are usually captured by completing students. But there are often relatively few completing students for the course. There are of course exceptions with certain types of courses and student groups.
- **Impacts on programs.** Fixed enrollment is often the only kind of enrollment that is allowed in community college settings. It “fits” with the institutional credit hour system. Fixed enrollment is probably the easiest enrollment type administratively for programs to use. If programs are funded by enrollment hours of performance, many programs begin courses as fixed enrollment because of a belief in its better educational value, but switch it to open enrollment after several weeks if too many students drop out and the program needs to keep “enrollment numbers up” for funding.

Managed Enrollment

Note: Many programs are using forms of managed enrollment without realizing it. Fixed enrollment that has some flexibility in it is often actually managed enrollment. Likewise, open enrollment may have had some restrictions placed on it and become managed.

- **Impacts on teachers.** Teachers are often initially concerned about working in a managed enrollment environment, but typically report liking it better than open enrollment afterwards. They like having a cohesive group of students arrive from orientation ready to learn, who

will be with them for an achievable length of time. They have a scope and sequence, curriculum, and can co-plan with fellow teachers.

- **Impacts on students.** With managed enrollment, course length is set at a shorter length intended to make it easier for students to persist to completion. If they must drop, they do not have to wait long to re-enroll. Students experiencing both, report liking the structure better than open enrollment because they feel more prepared for classes before entry, see progress towards goals, and more focus in the class.
- **Impacts on instruction.** Learning objectives, curriculum, and assessment, are matched to the goals of the students and the program and divided into the number of hours contained in the course. Direct, sequential, interactive instruction can then be delivered.
- **Impacts on outcomes.** Most programs that have moved from open to managed enrollment have reported decreased enrollments but increased persistence and learning gains.
- **Impacts on programs.** Programs moving to managed enrollment find intake staff time freed up for more time available for recruitment, retention, and other support services. They find counseling and orientation before and outside of class are to be critical components in the success of managed enrollment. Programs invest more up-front time in planning and with students than in any of the other enrollment types, but report results in increased persistence and learning, and a more cohesive and involved staff.

Sources: Beder 2006; Beder and Medina 2006; Belzer 2003; Chisman and Crandall 2007; Comings 2006; Cronan 2007; Hyzer and Haupt 2007; Kruideneier 2002, Long 2001; Patterson and Mellard 2006; Polis 2006; Povenmire 2006; Quigley 1998; Ramirez 2006; Robinson-Geller, Smith and Hofer 2003; Snow and Strucker 1999; Sticht 1998; Strucker 2007, Wrigley 2003; Ziegler and Durant 2001. Also, see State Profiles, this report.

Survey Question:

Do you have any other comments, insights, or experiences regarding open, fixed, or managed enrollment that you would like to share?

Most people responded to this question by saying “no”. However, there were a few additional comments (shown below). The only two “new” themes emerging were that some people were concerned about what the state/ICCB might require or should require. Others were interested in learning more about managed enrollment.

- ICCB should allow programs the flexibility to provide instruction that is appropriate for their population. Just because it works in Chicago doesn't mean it will work in Central Illinois.
- If the state is going to mandate changes in enrollment type, programs are going to need a lot of advanced notice and a lot of support.

- Now that I'm aware of managed enrollment, I think it could be a good option for student needs. It would be a systemic change, which is always hard, but I think students would be able to get an education more tailored to their own needs.
- I would like to know more about how to manage "managed" enrollment, in order to consider it.
- It might be a shock to our target population to not have the program accessible at all times throughout the year.
- I would like more data demonstrating the effectiveness of the types and which ones produce the best results in terms of learning gains, retention, access and number of enrollment hours.

Survey Question:

Would you consider using other methods/models of enrollment types in your program? Why or why not?

The “Yes, we’d consider it” outnumbered the “No, we don’t want to consider changing” about 8:1. Thus, there is a sizable minority of adult education administrators that believe that they have a good enrollment system in place and simply aren’t interested in tinkering with a winning formula. However, the vast majority are open to changing things, but most indicated that they would want a good rationale for making a change. Here is a sample of the “Yes, if

Comments:

- Yes, If meets the needs of students and maximizes generation . Also if would consider if would increase persistence and retention.
- If I were given clear and specific outcomes that one method was going to help MY program I would give it a chance. But to say that it works in a program in Chicago and that it should work for you is not going to convince me
- Yes, if I know that they produce better results for students and staff.
- If we see the need for change we would consider using other methods/models of enrollment type in our program.
- yes. I would like to use whatever type of enrollment that strengthens our program outcomes.
- Yes, it might be interesting to try at least one class of managed enrollment for both ABE/GED and ESL. Then that type of enrollment could be compared with the student outcomes of open enrollment.
- Yes, I would like to pilot other types of enrollment models to see if they would be beneficial.
- Yes, I would consider managed, if I could get the right blend of instructors, for particular classes only.

Research Response

1. Informal contacts with several states and with Dr. Lennox McLendon, Director of the National Adult Education Professional Development

Consortium indicate that there is great interest in “trying out” managed enrollment. Programs and states are eager for more information.

2. Research agrees with Illinois administrators that managed enrollment is best used in combination with an open enrollment option on site so that access and flexibility for students is optimized.

Sources: Comings et a 2006; Hyzer & Haupt 2006; Taylor 2003.

SPRING ADMINISTRATOR’S MEETING INPUT SESSION

Administrators were invited to attend an input session for the purpose of providing information into this study. There were 18 administrators who participated in the session. During the enrollment session, groups were asked to address the following questions specific to their enrollment practices:

1. What effects (positive and negative) does the use of each enrollment type have on a program, students, and the educational experience?
2. What are your greatest challenges? Solutions?
3. How / Where can each type be used well?
4. What else would you like us to know?

The information received from the first three questions was very much in line with survey responses. Programs were able to discuss their own program experiences and learned from one another’s experiences.

Question #4 *What else would you like us and ICCB to know regarding enrollment?* This question provided insight and opinions from programs regarding their thoughts about enrollment type. Their comments are provided below and fall into three main categories including funding, DAISI and informational needs. The complete report from the session can be found in Appendix C.

Input Session Question: WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT US (AND ICCB) TO KNOW?

ICCB

- We all want to make data based decisions.
- Be sure any new systems are fair and simple, not paper heavy.
- No one type fits all.
- Don’t say “no” to any one enrollment type.

- How would some of the current mandates/rules be impacted by various enrollment types?
- Be sure we all keep the focus on instruction and the student.
- We need to keep our flexibility
- Programs should be able to determine whether to use fixed, open, or managed enrollment by educational need rather than how I get my money
- There is a lot of disconnect between how to meet guidelines and program realities (for example, don't test before 100 hours of instruction, but I have an 8 week program and must pre and post test)
- Train the Regional Specialists on any new systems so they can give good information and advise us well.

Funding

- Whatever enrollment system that is used will be tied to funding. The system must be fair and flexible to programs.
- ICCB must focus more on quality not quantity in its funding formula
- Don't focus on numbers; focus on what produces better learning outcomes
- Focus on quality, not quantity
- State will need to look at quality and outcomes, not just numbers, because open will always favor sheer numbers. Can't "ding" programs for lower numbers if get quality outcomes. Processes for managing open will not work for fixed or managed. Systems need to evolve, including state processes.
- Count all types of enrollment hours the same way so we don't have to guess how students and enrollment hours are counted for generation; make the system transparent
- Count seat hours
- Need to clarify exactly how fixed enrollment hours are counted for generation. Confusion centers around "present at midterm" language.

DAISI

- It would be helpful if there were definitions that would be applied to each point in the DAISI system
- Be sure to look at how it would be applied to DAISI, and how it would apply to different kinds of programs.

Information needs

- Want to know what programs and practices are out there and if different programs and regional characteristics are matched up with any types
- Give us a lot of information about the enrollment types.
 - Good, complete explanations of each type
 - What are the pluses and minuses?
 - How do they affect test scores?
- Research the models and give the programs lots of information about them.
- We need to get professional development on new types.
6 hours of professional development with 8 week courses?

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The combination of research and input from Illinois administrators provided here provides a glimpse into what the field of adult education is examining across the nation: What *is* the most effective enrollment practice? There have not been enough research-based studies to answer that question. We do know the strengths and challenges that tend to accompany each enrollment type. And we do know how they each tend to impact teaching, learning, and programs.

Illinois administrators tend to use the enrollment type they are required to use by their agency, or what has been in place and worked for their students in the past. Their hesitation to try different enrollment types comes from two primary areas: concerns over whether funding will suffer if changes are made; and institutional concerns and constraints.

NEXT STEPS:

- 1. Discussions of enrollment practice have revealed the need to look at how programs bring students into and move students out of their programs.**

The Orientation/ assessment/ counseling component; and the Transition components of programs are handled qualitatively quite differently among programs. Are there common guidelines or quality practices?

Recommendation: Engage a study of quality practices in orientation/student entry; and transition policies and practices

- 2. Study local models for best practices.**

Programs that have had to work through the issues and concerns of the field often are the best models for others. Are there programs in Illinois that have worked through some of the concerns expressed in the survey and focus group?

Recommendation: Study local models; and record their experiences to share with others in similar circumstances.

- 3. A significant percentage of administrators do not have a basic understanding of managed enrollment.**

Managed enrollment is being urged by WIA as the way to increase persistence and learning gains, and meet the goals of increased intensity and duration of instruction. Yet Illinois administrators don't know enough about it to consider using it.

Recommendation: Share the research. Provide information about managed enrollment to programs. Bring in people who have had success piloting programs of their own for workshops.

4. **Some programs in Illinois are interested in piloting managed enrollment, but fear the funding impact.**
Other states have addressed this with a “hold harmless” provision for pilot programs. Could Illinois consider this or some other way to encourage experimentation?
Recommendation: Designate some pilot programs with “hold harmless” provisions. Contact experienced states for tips.

5. **Administrators are seeking a solid foundation of knowledge relating to funding impacts accompanying enrollment practices**
The reality is that programs need to know what and how a change in enrollment practice will financially impact their program. If the bottom line is to serve more, how will a change ensure they will meet their targets. Enrollment practices challenge adult educators philosophically, quality versus quantity? Is it worth their gamble? What can be done to support their efforts to try or incorporate different enrollment practice?
Recommendation: Provide detailed information on each enrollment type and update as changes occur.

6. **ICCB has been provided with insight as to what program concerns are as they relate to the impact of enrollment practices in their program.**
This report naturally leads to asking more questions about how enrollment practice could impact a shift to a focus on enhancing instruction, transition efforts or support for learners. Could it be that focusing on critical support mechanisms inside and outside the classroom help programs look at enrollment as a way to enhance or provide an opportunity to better support adult learners?
Recommendation: Continue discussions in administrators meetings, conferences, and Advisory Groups.

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