Transcript to Accompany *Virginia Adult Education 6-Year Trends* Recording

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Hello, my name is Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, I am the Adult Education Coordinator in the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. This tutorial is a lookback at six years of Virginia Adult Education trend data, program years 2017-2018 through 2022-2023.

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The purpose of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, or AEFLA, which is title II of the *Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act*, is to create a partnership among the federal government, states, and localities to provide adult education and literacy activities to all to these very broad purposes. Some keywords are extracted here: To assist adults to become literate and economically self-sufficient; to assist parents or family members to become full partners in the educational development of their children; to assist adults to earn a secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training; assist immigrants to develop skills in English and learn the roles and responsibilities of citizenship; and to assist incarcerated individuals successfully re-enter into society. That’s a very broad purpose and we are proud to work on all parts of it.

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As you know, Virginia is divided in to 22 regions for adult education. This ensures that we have full coverage for the Commonwealth. Our fiscal agents are local educational agencies (school divisions), community colleges, and community-based organizations. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education grants are awarded based on population need, not by region. We have just concluded a competition and have awarded providers for the next three years.

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This slide shows our funding and includes the 2023-2024 award. Our federal awards have increased over the years, as you can see in blue, with a slight dip in the current year. Our state awards have remained stable. Of note, our localities are required to provide a 15% match to the federal awards, so adult education in Virginia is truly a federal, state, and local partnership.

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Whom do we serve? We have some slides that cover all of these data points.

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Our enrollment trends are presented here. Of course, our enrollment decreased during the pandemic, but as you can see, we never closed, and we have rebounded. In the most recent year, enrollment was 18,118 students which passed pre-pandemic levels.

One thing to celebrate is that our retention rates remained high during the pandemic and beyond, and I want to celebrate what that means: from the programs that’s a lot of tutoring, personal outreach, and flexibility extended to students to help them stay and attain their goals. So, kudos to our programs and teachers for that extra effort. The graph on the bottom right is correctional education and as you may know, many facilities were completely closed to outside services during the pandemic and even in 2022-2023 many facilities were short staffed and could not accommodate services coming into the facilities. This set of our population is rebuilding more slowly as those facilities get back to normal and we are eager to increase our services.

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We can look at enrollment trends by program type. This past year we were back on trend with about 60% of our students in English language learning programs. Within this population, we serve students with a wide range of education, from those who have had interrupted education to those who have already earned postsecondary degrees. In program year 2022-2023, 33% of our foreign-born students were internationally trained professionals.

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We serve working age adults, mostly women. Our largest age group is 25-44 years old, seen in the brown bar. These are very busy years in a family for adults and we applaud our students for adding education onto their already busy schedule. It’s worth noting that over 65% of our students are women and this is something we are looking at for programming implications. I would like to pause for a moment on the dark blue part of the bars, which is the youth. We can serve young students, 16-18, and assist them to earn their secondary credential if they have been excused from compulsory attendance. Also, 60+, which is the green portion of the bar, can be quite the range, we have served individuals with many more years than 60 and we are happy to be serving those seniors.

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Here is another way to look at enrollment. We serve minorities, mostly Hispanic. You can see the trends here with the sharp uptick here after the pandemic; we love that kick. You can see that Hispanic students are our largest minority group. It was the most impacted in our enrollment in 2020-2021 but is back to trend. It is worth saying that 40% of our total enrollment is Hispanic women in a normal year.

Taken together, adult education in Virginia is a majority-minority program. Over 75% of our students identify themselves as a race or ethnicity other than White.

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This is another way to look at our busy learners. Over half of them tell us that they are employed when they enroll – even during the pandemic when so many people were out of work. Students come to us not necessarily for job placement They are seeking skills that will help them advance in their lives and careers. It is a real honor and privilege to serve learners who are so motivated to continue their education that they are adding it to their very busy lives.

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Let’s talk about how we measure success in adult education. I have some slides to talk about all of these points.

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One programming model that we are very proud of is Integrated Education and Training. This is an intense combination of academic skills, English language proficiency, workforce preparation, and occupational training toward earning an industry recognized credential. These programs are usually short in duration, not longer than a semester and often quite a bit shorter than that. They are intense, goal-driven, and prepare students for credential exams. We have consistently run about 10% of our overall enrollment in IET programming. The top sectors in 2021-2022 are shown on the left and you can see a map of planned offerings at IETBlueprint.com.

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Another way to look at this IET success is that we have been communicating that this is a good model for young adults who are disconnected from the workforce. We try to get them in, get them their secondary credential if they don’t have it, refresh, and fill in any academic gaps they may have; offer workplace readiness skills and practice, get them into an occupational training program, and help them earn a credential that will get them started in the workforce. We have been communicating that IET is a good option for young people, and it looks like it is working for us. Our largest share of enrollment by age group is the 16-24-year-old group.

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We report to the federal office our Measurable Skills Gain rate as one of our six performance indicators; it is a measure that reflects gains made within the program year. You can see that 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were quite disrupted as Virginia had, as had the rest of the nation, allowance to not require assessments which had to be administered in person. We were offering services but not assessing students regularly, so students’ gains were not documented. Something else that has positively impacted our MSG performance since the pandemic was that the addition of three new MSG types being allowed for students in an IET or workplace literacy programs, so we have seen a bump from the addition of those MSGs as well.

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Credential attainment rate is another of the six performance indicators. This measure is a follow up measure of students’ outcomes within a year of exiting the program. We capture this data through data matches with the National Student Clearinghouse, the Virginia Community College System, and through supplemental data captured by the programs. You can see that we exceeded our target on this measure in 2022-2023.

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Median earnings second quarter after exit is another of the six performance measures and another one that is captured for students who have exited the program. This chart shows a steady increase in earnings for our alumni students and that Virginia exceeded the negotiated target in 2022-23.

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Of course, we offer High School Equivalency and help folks get their secondary credential and get back on track. Currently, the GED® is the only approved High School Equivalency test in Virginia. This slide shows us Virginia as a whole, not only adult education students. Again, during the pandemic, testing centers had very limited hours or very limited seating, or both. Online proctored testing did get started in 2020, and now that is part of the normal mix. We are now seeing test-takers, completers, and passers all on the increase. As you know, there are four tests in the GED® battery and you must pass all four to earn the credential, so we will always see more test takers than passers. Our pass rate in Virginia overall is 79%, which is higher than the national average. We are proud of our GED® program and all of our graduates.

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This slide is not a trend but rather is displaying a single year, but the trend is the same. I want to point out that we are a largely part-time workforce. Almost 95% of our teachers are part-time, our paraprofessionals are largely part-time, our counselors or career-navigators are almost all part-time, and about half of our administrators are part-time. This situation has implications for how we run our program, provide professional development, and plan for change and new initiatives. This is a little above the national ratio for part-time to full-time, so this is a challenge we continue to face.

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Some of our recent investments are listed here and I will share a highlight for each of these. We invested in leadership training for program administrators and have supported two cohorts of adult educators to complete the certification course to become an adult career coach, a role we are prioritizing within regional programs.

We invested in customized online courses from Virtual Virginia and have offered ongoing technical assistance to programs and instructors to implement this new model of instruction.

I’ll show a slide on family literacy next.

And we continue to run outreach and messaging campaigns to spread the word that we offer enrolled students GED® testing vouchers, each of the four subtests are $36, so our vouchers allow students to take their tests without delay or financial stress.

And lastly, in program year 2023-2024, we will roll out a new data system that will be more user friendly for practitioners, provide more timely and transparent data for administrators and the state staff for program improvement, and which will include a student interface that will virtually eliminate the need for paper intake forms.

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I’d like to take an extra moment to discuss family literacy. We have invested a small amount in family literacy over the past couple years, trying to restart this programming model. Family literacy under AEFLA is a two-generation, four component approach: teaching adult education to the parents and caregivers of children in school and doing parenting classes and parent and child together programming. We continue to work with the National Center for Families Learning which is the national leader in family literacy to offer professional development, technical assistance, and coaching to the programs who are trying to restart family literacy in their communities, and they are represented here on this screen for the 2023-2024 year.

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That concludes the trend recording. Please reach out to us, we are happy to talk to anyone about adult education. We are proud of our programs, our students, and our teachers. We look forward to the rebounding enrollment and expanding programming in Virginia. Thank you.