

Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

Findings from the *Implementation and Early Impact Report* | May 2019 | OPRE Report #2019-24

WHAT ISSUES DID I-BEST SEEK TO ADDRESS?



Many skilled jobs paying a middle wage or higher require **postsecondary education or training**.



Many low-income adults **lack the basic skills and/or English language proficiency** to enroll in and complete postsecondary training.



Few students in traditional **basic skills programs** (Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language) go on to earn college credits and credentials.

WHAT IS I-BEST?



Launched in 2006 by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), which operates basic skills education in the state.



Goal is to help students, who otherwise might spend extended time in remediation, enroll and succeed in college-level credit-bearing occupational training courses for in-demand jobs.



Funded by federal and state adult education and community college sources, with additional philanthropic funding for the three colleges in the PACE Evaluation to provide enhanced services to students.



Recruits students currently enrolled in basic skills programs and prospective students interested in pursuing occupational training whose English, reading, and math skills are too low to enter training directly.

WHAT IS I-BEST’S APPROACH?



Integrated basic skills and job training, typically one- or two-quarters long, within a structured career pathway to enable lower-skilled students to earn college credits and in-demand occupational credentials.



Team teaching by a basic skills instructor and an occupational instructor during at least 50 percent of occupational training class time.



Basic skills support classes in many programs to clarify concepts from occupational training classes, address basic skills required to succeed in those classes, and help students prepare for assignments and tests.



Financial support* to “fill the gap” for tuition and materials for participants unable to obtain other aid.

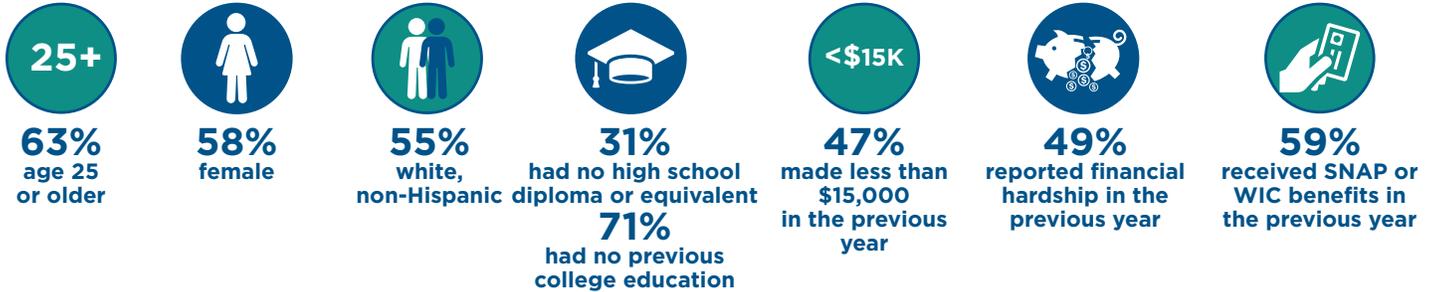


Additional advising* focused on students’ academic needs, navigating college procedures, and career planning.

* For the three colleges in the PACE evaluation only.

WHO ENROLLED IN THE I-BEST STUDY?

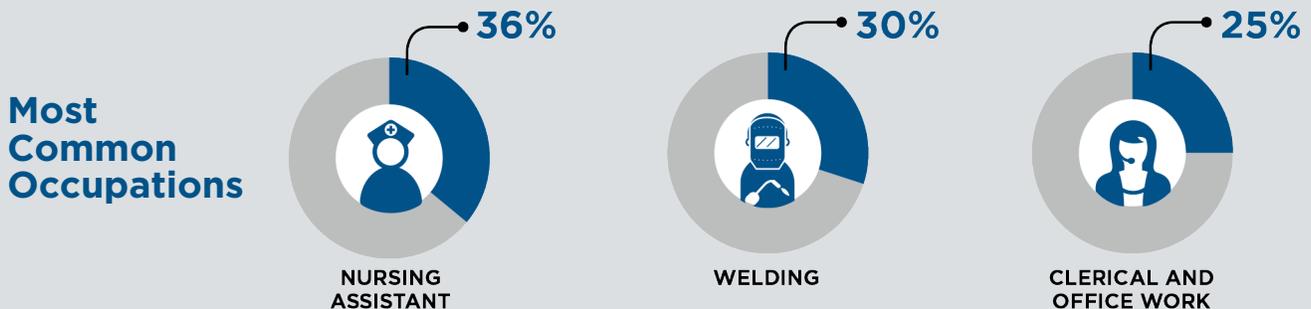
Three Washington colleges participated in the PACE study: Bellingham Technical College, Everett Community College, and Whatcom Community College. For PACE, the program randomly assigned 631 study participants, 315 to the treatment group and 316 to the control group. Across treatment and control members, study participants were older and less educated than typical community college students: nearly one third had less than a high school diploma or equivalent, more than two thirds had never attended college, and fewer than one tenth had attended at least one year of college.



WHAT TRAINING DID TREATMENT GROUP MEMBERS ENROLL IN AND COMPLETE?



Of those who enrolled in occupational training...

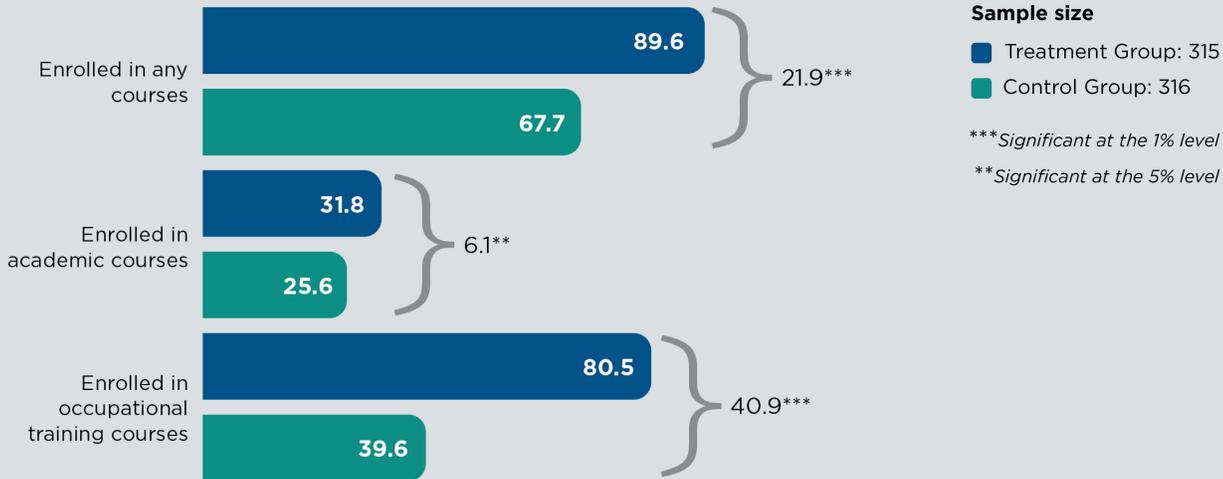


Occupational training programs included in PACE were Automotive, Clerical Assistant, Electrical, Nursing Assistant, Precision Machining, Sustainable Office Skills, Welding.

WHAT WERE THE IMPACTS OF I-BEST ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

I-BEST substantially increased enrollment in college courses, particularly in occupational training courses.

ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE COURSES (%)



Source: SBCTC records

I-BEST participants were more likely to earn college certificates or degrees.

The program increased completion of these credentials by more than 32 percentage points during the 24-month follow-up period.

RECEIVED A CERTIFICATE OR DEGREE FROM A COLLEGE (%)



CREDENTIAL RECEIPT BY TYPE (%)

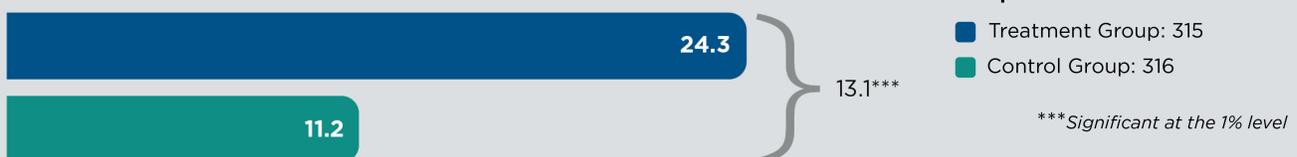


Source: SBCTC records

I-BEST participants earned more than twice as many college credits.

Academic credits are attached to courses that are suitable for academic transfer to another college, such as English Composition I. Workforce credits are attached to training courses that are categorized as occupational in nature and include I-BEST courses such as Applied Mechanics.

TOTAL CREDITS EARNED AT 24 MONTHS (#)

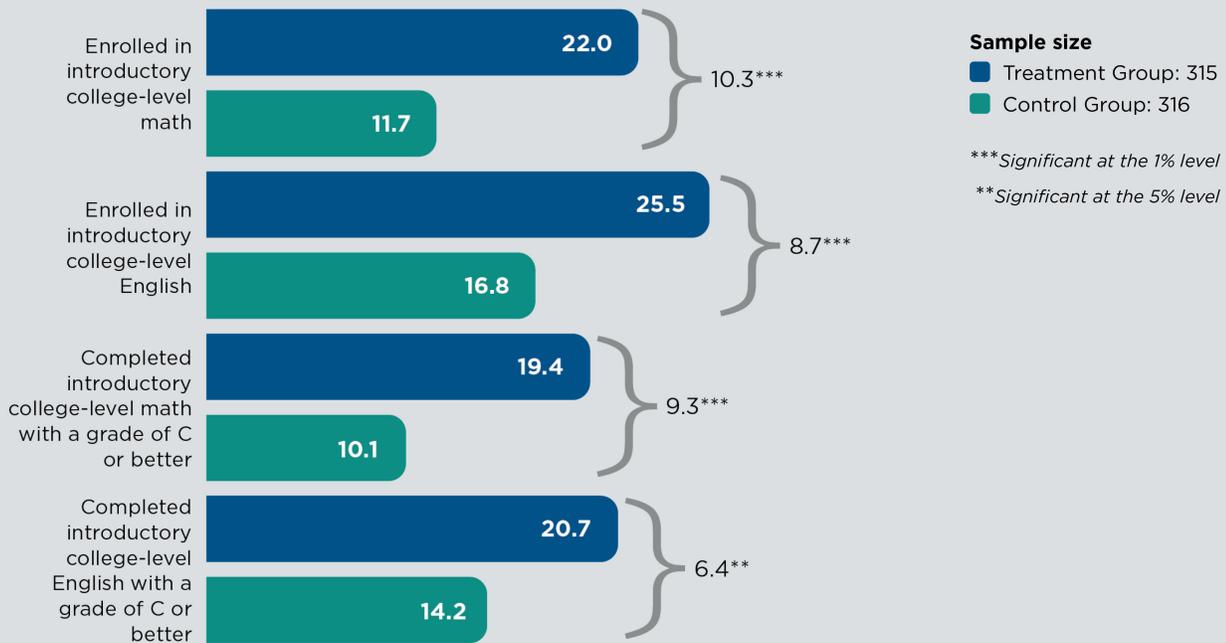


Source: SBCTC records

Impact may not equal difference between groups due to rounding

I-BEST participants were more likely to enroll in and complete key “gatekeeper” courses for advancement into higher-level college courses.

ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION OF COLLEGE-LEVEL ACADEMIC COURSES (%)

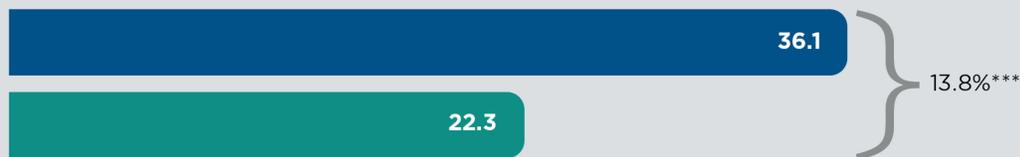


Source: SBCTC records

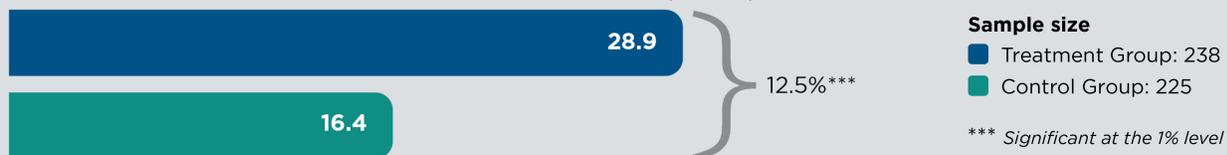
WHAT WERE THE IMPACTS OF I-BEST ON SERVICE RECEIPT?

I-BEST increased receipt of advising and employment services, reflecting that I-BEST students had advisors specifically assigned to work with them.

RECEIPT OF CAREER COUNSELING (%)



RECEIPT OF HELP IN ARRANGING FOR SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL, WORK, OR FAMILY (%)



RECEIPT OF JOB SEARCH OR PLACEMENT SERVICES (%)



Source: PACE 18-month follow-up survey

Impact may not equal difference between groups due to rounding

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HOW I-BEST IMPLEMENTED TEAM TEACHING?

A hallmark of the I-BEST model is team teaching. The colleges and instructors had flexibility in how they approached team teaching, including how occupational and basic skills instructors defined their roles within the classroom and planned their time together. The evaluation identified three general approaches:



Basic skills instructor as an active student, sitting in class with the students and stopping the occupational instructor to ask clarifying questions or for a concept to be further explained if students were having difficulty with the material. This approach was used often in occupational courses that were primarily lecture based and highly technical, such as Welding and Precision Machining.



Basic skills instructor delivers part of the content during a designated part of the occupational classes. For example, the basic skills instructor might start each class with a discussion of study skills before turning it over to the occupational instructor to present technical information.



Basic skills and occupational instructors jointly deliver class content. From the students' perspective, delivery is seamless; it may not be apparent which instructor is responsible for which type of content. Staff reported this approach was more suitable to I-BEST programs where the occupational focus was not highly technical or specialized, such as Office Skills.

Team teaching was most successful when co-instructors had planning time and worked together over multiple quarters, according to I-BEST staff. Occupational skills instructors needed time to adapt to the learning styles of students with lower basic skills. Joint planning activities helped teaching teams define roles and integrate their instruction. By contrast, programs experienced challenges when using staff who were newer to the I-BEST model and who had not taught together before. Adjunct instructors faced more challenges to finding sufficient planning time.

Beyond team teaching, basic skills instructors also provided extra advising and support. Basic skills instructors at each of the three colleges provided tutoring and one-on-one academic support.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PACE EVALUATION OF I-BEST?



Initial findings from the PACE study provide **strong causal evidence** that confirms earlier, less rigorous research findings that the **I-BEST model increases college access and academic success for low-skilled adults**. Under traditional policies such students are typically not allowed to enter college-level courses until they have completed remediation. The PACE results are important and timely given the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's emphasis on integrated education and training approaches like I-BEST and the replication of the I-BEST model in a number of other states.



Beyond helping students apply for financial aid, the **dedicated student advisors ("navigators") available in these three colleges' I-BEST programs through PACE-linked foundation funds provided proactive advising to students** regarding class progress, potential barriers to participation, and career and academic planning. Staff believed this was critical to students' success.



I-BEST participants mostly earned workforce credits and credentials, but they were also **more likely to enroll in and complete gatekeeper college math and English classes essential for entering two- and four-year degree programs**. Because I-BEST helped open these doors between short-term occupational programs and longer, more academic ones, this may enable more students who began with low basic skills to pursue higher levels of education that can lead to higher-paying jobs. Later PACE reports will include participant outcomes and shed light on whether or not I-BEST ultimately increased attainment of degrees.

Submitted by:

Karen Gardiner
PACE Project Director
Abt Associates

Submitted to:

Nicole Constance
Federal Project Officer
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Contract number: HHSP2332007913YC

This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary. Suggested citation: Strawn, J. (2019). *PACE Evaluation: Findings from Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Program Implementation and Early Impact Report*, OPRE Report #2019-24. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



What is PACE?

The Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) evaluation uses a random assignment methodology to assess the effectiveness of nine career pathways programs targeting low-income, low skilled individuals on credential attainment, employment, and earnings. Key features of career pathways programs include:

1. A series of well-defined training steps;
2. Promising instructional approaches targeted to adult learners;
3. Services to address academic and non-academic barriers to program enrollment and completion; and
4. Connections to employment.

This brief summarizes findings from the implementation study and impacts 18-24 months following study intake. The study is funded by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Next steps in the PACE evaluation of Washington State’s I-BEST

The next I-BEST report will cover a 36-month follow-up period and will examine employment outcomes, such as average rate of employment and average earnings over successive follow-up quarters, and job characteristics, such as occupation, hourly wage, receipt of benefits, and career progress. Thus, it will begin to answer whether the services provided by I-BEST result in economic gains in the workplace in the longer term. It will also include a cost-benefit study. An analysis at 72 months after random assignment will estimate the program’s long-term effects on earnings.

This brief summarizes findings from the following report: Glosser, A., K. Martinson, S.-W. Cho, and K. Gardiner (2018). *Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) Program in Three Colleges: Implementation and Early Impact Report*, OPRE Report #2018-87. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This brief, the full report, and other PACE publications are available at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/pathways-for-advancing-careers-and-education> and www.career-pathways.org



The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) studies Administration for Children and Families (ACF) programs and the populations they serve through rigorous research and evaluation projects. These include evaluations of existing programs, evaluations of innovative approaches to helping low-income children and families, research syntheses, and descriptive and exploratory studies. OPRE also works to improve the analysis of data and coordinate performance management for ACF.



Abt Associates is a mission-driven, global leader in research, evaluation, and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development.



[Sign-up for the ACF OPRE News E-Newsletter](#)



Like OPRE on Facebook
facebook.com/OPRE.ACF



Follow OPRE on Twitter
[@OPRE_ACF](https://twitter.com/OPRE_ACF)