

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)



Talent and skills determine the competitive edge in today's global market, yet in Washington, 400,000 working adults do not have a high school diploma and an additional million adults lack education beyond high school.

Today, most new jobs—and the majority paying a family wage—require some education beyond high school.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical College (SBCTC) research found that only 13 percent of English as a Second Language (ESL) students and less than a third of adult basic education (ABE) students continued on to college-level work.

What is I-BEST?

In Washington's 34 community and technical colleges, Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) pairs workforce training and ABE or ESL so students learn literacy and workplace skills at the same time. Adult literacy and vocational instructors work together to develop and deliver instruction. Colleges provide higher levels of support and student services to address the needs of non-traditional students.

- More than 140 approved programs, expanding each year since its 2006 launch.
- 2,795 students were served in 2009, a one-year increase of 58 percent.

I-BEST career fields include:

- Architecture/Engineering
- Automotive/Engine Repair
- Commercial Driver's License/Transportation
- Corrections/Law Enforcement
- Early Childhood Education/Childcare
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing/Trades
- Office Support/Technology

Why I-BEST?

The influx of non-English speakers and high numbers of adults lacking a high school diploma means higher demand for adult literacy and job skills training.

SBCTC and the college system developed I-BEST to better support adult basic education students advance to certificate and degree completion. Because a portion of credits earned must be college-level, I-BEST paves the way for students to continue their training or to return for more education.

The goal is to get students to the first economic tipping point—45 college-level credits and a vocational certificate—getting them on a path to earning a living wage for themselves and their families.

Does I-BEST Work?

The Community College Research Center recently conducted an evaluation of I-BEST and found, students participating in I-BEST did better than other basic skills students. I-BEST students were more likely than others to:

- Continue into credit-bearing coursework
- Earn occupational certificates
- Make point gains on basic skills tests
- I-BEST students had a higher probability of persisting into the second year: 78 percent, compared to 61 percent for the matched group.