

State of Louisiana TANF Evaluation

Year 3 Evaluation of TANF Initiatives Programs

Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission
Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Tuition Services and Skills Upgrade Programs

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Foreword

Under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, states are allowed to use federal TANF block grant funds to support a variety of programs targeting needy families beyond the traditional welfare-eligible population. Availing itself of the flexibility allowed under TANF, the Louisiana State Legislature allocated a sizable amount of the state's unspent federal TANF funds, starting in FFY2002, to a variety of programs known collectively as the TANF Initiatives. The total allocations amounted to \$105 million in FFY2002 and \$160 million in FFY2003. In its third year, the TANF Initiatives consist of over 20 programs administered by 11 state agencies with a total budget of \$127 million.

For the past three years, Berkeley Policy Associates, a social policy research and consulting firm in Oakland, California, has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the State of Louisiana's TANF-funded programs under contract with the Division of Administration. Included in this evaluation are the state welfare programs administered by the Department of Social Services (the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program and the Strategies to Empower People Program) as well as selected programs under the TANF Initiatives Program. The third year evaluation of the TANF Initiatives covers the following programs: After Schools for All Program and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (the Department of Education), Tuition and Upgrade Programs (the Workforce Commission and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System), Post Release Skills Program (the Department of Public Safety and Correction), Pre Release Program for Incarcerated Fathers (the Louisiana Community and Technical College System), Substance Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Program (the Department of Health and Hospitals) and Drug Court Program (the Louisiana Supreme Court). The current report represents one in a series of the Year 3 TANF Initiatives Evaluation Reports.

Key Findings

- Wages for employed program participants begin to rise upon enrollment and continue to increase each quarter thereafter.
- Participants' wages more than double two years after program enrollment. Tuition students receive higher average earnings than Upgrade students do, but earnings for both groups grow at comparable rates in the first year after program entry.
- Fifty-eight percent of program participants are employed in their first quarter after enrollment, exceeding the program target of 55 percent.
- Sixty-seven percent of participants are employed in at least two of the four quarters after enrolling in the program, and 35 percent of participants are employed in all four quarters after enrollment.
- Students earning a degree or a certificate show substantially higher post-program earnings. Degree-earning participants have quarterly earnings about \$700 higher than their non-degree counterparts. The disparity is even greater among Tuition students, with degree-earning students earning \$1,500 more per quarter than non-degree earning participants per quarter. Only 14 percent of participants complete a degree or certificate.
- Only 30 percent of program participants meet the workplace literacy goals they establish, indicating that most students leave workplace literacy with unmet work-related literacy needs. Many participants do not take all three core assessments or any additional assessments, and only ten percent are spending the recommended time in this component.
- Receipt of a Work Ready Certificate appears to be unrelated to employment or earnings, although more than half of participants earn a Work Ready Certificate.
- The program's web-based data system is still experiencing a number of implementation problems, with incomplete and sometimes inaccurate reporting of student information. This prevents both researchers and practitioners from fully understanding participants' backgrounds and needs, program utilization, and educational achievement.
- Completion of the Education/Employment Action Plan (EEAP) appears to be effective in helping participants become employed and achieve higher earnings, but few students (41 percent) actually complete the EEAP process.

Introduction

For the third consecutive year, the Governor's Office of the Workforce Commission has partnered with the Louisiana Community Technical College System (LCTCS) to offer customized workplace literacy and technical skills training for low-income parents. The Workplace Basic and Technical Skills Training and Retention Services program is one of several programs, referred to as the TANF Initiatives, utilizing funding from the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS). These programs were authorized by the State Legislature to expend surplus federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds to address a variety of needs of TANF clients and those at-risk of becoming dependent on cash assistance.¹ State legislators have allocated \$10 million of TANF funds to the Basic and Technical Skills Training program in each of its three years of operation.²

In program year three, the LCTCS again served as subcontractor to the Workforce Commission to provide education and training services to program participants. The joint community and technical college system is the state's most important institution for providing technical skills training and academic education to adult learners. The LCTCS is made up of eight community colleges, 40 campuses of Louisiana Technical College (LTC), and two technical community colleges. In Fall 2003, over 49,000 students were enrolled in the LCTCS.

Berkeley Policy Associates (BPA), a social policy research and consulting firm in Oakland, California, is under contract with the Division of Administration (DOA) to conduct the evaluation of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs in Louisiana. This report presents findings from our evaluation of the Workforce Commission's Workplace Basic and Technical Skills Training and Retention Services Program during its third year of operation. We discuss program features of the Basic and Technical Skills Training program, including design and utilization of the Tuition, Upgrade, supportive services, and workplace literacy components of the Initiative. We also present employment, educational, and workplace literacy outcomes for all students who have participated in the program since its inception in SFY 2001.

The Basic and Technical Skills Training program, which has served over 15,000 low-income parents over three years, is in its final year of receiving TANF Initiative funding. The program has focused on serving low-income adults in need of skills training and literacy improvements to gain and retain employment. Data and interviews show that the program has succeeded in drawing in participants who had not previously taken courses at LCTCS institutions in addition to assisting previously enrolled participants with childcare, transportation, supplies, and tuition costs. Previous evaluations found that participants appreciated the extra support provided by TANF campus staff. Accomplishments of the

¹Federal TANF block grant funds may be used for programs that meet any of the four stated goals of the TANF program. The Basic and Technical Skills Training program addresses the TANF goal to "end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage."

² Program year one ran from October 1, 2001 to September 30, 2002, year two ran from October 1, 2002 to August 31, 2003, and year three began August 18, 2003 and ends August 31, 2004.

TANF Initiatives Program Summary Workplace Basic and Technical Skills Training and Retention Services Program	
Contract Agency:	Governor’s Office of the Workforce Commission
Initiative Grant Amount:	\$10,000,000 (for August 2003 – August 2004 program year)
FY 2004 Expenditures:	\$8,442,911
Program Background and Services:	Basic and Job Skills Training and Retention Services Program provides workplace literacy education and customized skill upgrade training to low-income parents. TANF Initiative funds are used to provide services that target Louisiana’s low-literate population.
Subcontractors:	The Workforce Commission contracts with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) to provide education and training services.
Initiative Locations:	Services are provided at all locations of the LCTCS system, which includes 8 Community Colleges, 2 Technical- Community Colleges, and 40 branches of the Louisiana Technical College. Services are also provided at community-based organizations and local agencies.
Target Population:	Adults with children under age 20 and earned income levels at or below 200 percent of federal poverty line
Total Number of Participants Served:	5,506 participants (August 2003 - May 2004) 15,535 since September 2001

program include: higher average earnings for employed participants, increased work-related literacy skills and credentials for students, and degree and certificate attainment by some participants. The TANF Initiative program has led to new ways of serving students at LCTCS institutions, through wider implementation of workplace literacy services, new subjects of instruction, and increased access to financial aid. And while some program-eligible adults may be able to utilize other financial assistance once TANF funds are no longer available, customized trainings will no longer exist and many program participants will lose access to one of the few financial aid sources available to adults who find it difficult to meet the often-high literacy requirements of other financial aid programs.

The Basic and Technical Skills Training program offers two principal services to eligible participants: 1) Tuition assistance, which allows participants to enroll in standard classes offered at LCTCS campuses; and 2) Upgrade training programs, which are short-term skill training programs designed to provide pre-employment training in high-demand occupations or to assist employed participants seeking to advance their careers. Tuition and Upgrade participants also take workplace literacy assessments and training (using the WorkKeys tool developed by ACT); develop an individualized Employment/Education Action Plan (EEAP); and can access assistance for childcare, supplies, and transportation expenses. Parents, legal guardians, or caretaker relatives caring for children age 19 or younger and with household income levels no higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible to participate in the program. Year three TANF Initiative funds were available for three terms: Fall 2003, Spring 2004, and Summer 2004.³

Program Implementation

Trends in Participation

Since their inception in SFY 2001, the TANF Tuition and Upgrade programs have served more than 15,000 adults. Program participants have generally been young, unmarried mothers who enter with low literacy levels and receive short-term training in fields such as health, business, and customer service. As Exhibit 1 shows, more than 80 percent of these participants have been enrolled in Tuition programs, and many of them have been unmarried African-American females with two or more children. Nearly 60 percent of the TANF students served since 2001 have been under 30 years of age.

Important differences can be seen between Tuition and Upgrade students with respect to their entering education and employment levels. Exhibit 1 shows that Tuition students are nearly three times as likely as Upgrade students to have already acquired some level of postsecondary education. Upgrade students are more likely to have a high school level education or less and to be unemployed upon program entry.

³ Program year two funds provided Tuition assistance for some students who enrolled in the fall semester 2003. Program year three began August 18, 2003, so Fall 2003 enrollees were funded from both program year two and year three expenditures.

Exhibit 1
Characteristics of Tuition and Upgrade Students
All Program Years (2001-2004)

	<u>Tuition</u>	<u>Upgrade</u>	<u>All Participants</u>
Number of Participants (a)	12,742	2,793	15,535
Percent Female	90.4	90.6	90.4
Average Age	29.4	30.8	29.7
Percent 19 to 29	58.8	53.8	57.8
Percent 30 to 39	30.0	27.8	29.6
Percent 40 and over	11.2	18.1	12.6
Percent Not Married	84.2	89.9	85.3
Percent African American	70.6	83.7	73.2
Percent White	26.7	14.5	24.3
Average Number of Children	1.9	1.9	1.9
Percent with 1-2 children	76.7	74.3	76.2
Percent with 3 or more children	23.2	25.8	23.8
Percent Less than high school	17.4	28.8	19.3
Percent high school diploma/GED	51.6	59.9	53.1
Percent post-secondary	31.0	11.1	27.7
Percent Employed	28.7	15.5	26.1

Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS web-based data.

Note: Data in web-based system is self-reported.

(a) From Workforce Commission Monthly Reports

Tuition and Upgrade students also enter their respective programs with different goals. Exhibit 2 shows the primary goals of entering Tuition and Upgrade students over the past three years. The largest proportion of Tuition students enroll in the TANF program with the goal of acquiring a two-year or a four-year degree. Upgrade students, however, are much more likely to have towards employment-related goals, with more than 87 percent seeking to acquire a job or job-related credentials.

Exhibit 2		
Primary Goal of Entering Students		
All Program Years (2001-2004)		
<u>Goal</u>	<u>Percent (%) With Goal</u>	
	<u>Tuition</u>	<u>Upgrade</u>
Earn a two-year or four-year degree	39.1	3.6
Earn a high school diploma or GED	4.7	7.4
Improve basic literacy-numeracy skills	5.4	1.5
<i>Total Educational Goal</i>	49.2	12.5
Earn a job-related certificate	35.2	56.6
Obtain a job	13.7	26.6
Retain or improve status in current job	1.3	4
<i>Total Employment Goal</i>	50.2	87.2
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>7,315</i>	<i>1,762</i>

Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS web-based data.

Overall enrollment in Tuition and Upgrade programs has fluctuated since the programs began in SFY 2001. Exhibit 3 shows the total number of students served by each program during the past three years. Both programs experienced significant enrollment increases in year two, with Tuition enrollment more than doubling. The third year, however, saw declines in enrollment for both the Tuition and Upgrade programs.

A new Pell Grant policy may have played a role in declining Tuition program enrollment. In December 2003, a new policy was implemented that requires students to choose between TANF Initiative and Pell Grant funding. This policy was inspired in part by the desire of the Technical Colleges to avoid duplicating the services of the Pell Grant program. With limited Tuition funding available, TANF Initiative planners also wanted to focus remaining funds on students with no other financial resources to attend college, and backed this policy to prevent Pell recipients from using TANF funds to enroll summer Tuition programs. Some policymakers anticipated that this policy would cause Tuition enrollment to fall due to the fact that students seemed to prefer Pell’s cash payment rather than tuition reimbursement paid by TANF funds. While we cannot determine the extent to which this has occurred, the Tuition program did experience a significant drop in enrollment after the policy was implemented. While more than 4,200 students were participating in the program as of November 2003, only 3,100 students were still participating as of February 2004. While many other factors were likely involved, this steep drop in participation suggests that the Pell policy may be at least partly responsible for the decline in year three Tuition enrollment.

Exhibit 3				
Total Program Enrollment Over Time				
<u>Program</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Total</u>
Tuition	2,415	5,707	4,620	12,742
Upgrade	907	1,194	692	2,793
Total	3,322	6,901	5,312	15,535

Source: Workforce Commission Monthly Monitoring Reports.

Upgrade participation declined significantly in year three. As Exhibit 3 shows, the number of students participating in Upgrade programs fell from a high of about 1,200 in program year two (2002-2003) to about 700 one year later. State-level officials indicated that this might have resulted from two different developments. First, while the Tuition program costs about \$1,500 per student to fund, Upgrade programs routinely exceed this amount. Second, a number of officials became increasingly concerned that they could not attract sufficient Upgrade enrollment to justify the significant investment that developing Upgrade programs often entails, particularly with Tuition funds rapidly being depleted. This is evidenced by the decline in the number of Upgrade programs offered from 70 in year two to only 19 in year three.

The characteristics of students participating in Tuition and Upgrade programs changed notably over time. Exhibit 4 displays the background characteristics of students who enrolled in TANF programs in each of the three program years. Although females have always represented the largest share of both Tuition and Upgrade students, more males have been participating in later program years. This is likely the result of the state-level initiative to increase collaboration with Support Enforcement Services (SES) and Drug Courts, which serve mostly male clients. This 2004 legislation gave SES and Drug Courts the authority to order education and skills training for their clients, and has often resulted in referrals to TANF Tuition and Upgrade programs.

Both Tuition and Upgrade programs have served an increasing number low-literate adults over the past three years. Exhibit 4 shows that in the programs' first year only 10 percent of Tuition students and 17 percent of Upgrade students entered with less than a high school level education. By program year three, however, the proportion of students entering with less than a high school education rose to more than 19 percent for Tuition programs and more than doubled to 37 percent for Upgrade programs. The same data also point to a gradual decline in the proportion of incoming students with a post-secondary education.

Exhibit 4
Characteristics of TANF Enrollment Over Time
 All Program Years (2001-2004)

<u>Program</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>
<u>Tuition</u>	2,415	5,707	4,620
Percent Female	93.4	90.1	89
Percent Less than high school	10.3	18.6	19.4
Percent high school/GED	50.8	51.4	51.1
Percent post-secondary	37.6	28.4	29.4
Percent Employed	27.6	24.6	33.7
 <u>Upgrade</u>	 907	 1,194	 692
Percent Female	94.4	89.6	88.5
Percent Less than high school	17.2	29.9	36.7
Percent high school/GED	67.6	59.9	52.9
Percent post-secondary	13.5	9.8	10
Percent Employed	14.5	16.4	14

Source: Total enrollment numbers taken from Monthly Monitoring Reports. Other calculations use LCTCS web-based data.

The new Pell Grant policy may have also further sharpened the TANF programs' focus on low-literate students. As mentioned earlier, prior to the implementation of the Pell policy in December 2003, some students were receiving Pell Grants during the academic year and enrolling in a TANF Tuition or Upgrade program during the summer. Pell recipients have relatively high literacy levels due to the program requirement that Pell students must demonstrate a sufficiently high skill level to receive the grant. Pell recipients' presence raised the overall skill level of the participants served by the Tuition program. State-level interviewees speculated that the new Pell policy resulted in some students choosing to stick with their Pell funding over the TANF funding, which left the program with a higher concentration of low-literate students.

Entering Literacy Levels

Administrative data from a group of Technical Colleges highlight the diversity of entering literacy levels of adults served by the Tuition and Upgrade programs.⁴ The most commonly reported

⁴ These campuses are Natchitoches Technical College, Lafayette Technical College, Florida Parishes Technical College, and West Jefferson Technical College. These campuses provided data on field of study, degree/certificate receipt, and assessment scores for more than 1,300 students who participated in the program over the past three years.

assessment is the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), which measures reading, mathematics, language, and spelling skill levels in terms of grade levels from zero to twelve. While this information allows us to describe students' literacy levels upon entry, it does not permit us to compare pre- and post-program test scores that would speak to the program's effectiveness in improving basic literacy skills. Also, because this information comes from only four Technical College campuses, it is not meant to be representative of Tuition and Upgrade students at all LCTCS campuses.

Both Tuition and Upgrade students enter their programs with stronger reading and language skills than math skills. Exhibit 5 shows TABE achievement data for students who participated in TANF programs during the past three years at the four different Technical College Campuses. As the exhibit shows, about half of all Tuition and Upgrade students entered their respective programs with reading and language at the 11th grade level or higher. With respect to math skills however, both Tuition and Upgrade students were most likely to enter their programs at the sixth to tenth grade level.

Exhibit 5
TABE Achievement Among Program Participants
 All Program Years (2001-2004)

	Number of Students	Percent Testing at Grade Level:		
		Below 6	6 to 10	11 to 12
<u>All Participants</u>	871			
Reading		11.6	42.5	45.9
Language		19.3	30.3	50.4
Math		16.9	50.8	32.4
<u>Tuition Students</u>	675			
Reading		11.7	41.9	46.4
Language		18.5	31.1	50.4
Math		17.5	50.4	32.2
<u>Upgrade Students</u>	196			
Reading		11.2	44.4	44.4
Language		21.9	27.6	50.5
Math		14.8	52.0	33.2

Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS administrative data from seven campuses.

Program participants take the TABE at different times. All LCTCS students take the TABE or some other assessment when first enrolling in any LCTCS program. For those students who had not previously matriculated at LCTCS, this test occurred within two months of enrolling in a Tuition or Upgrade program. Many students, however, had already matriculated at LCTCS and took the TABE more than two months prior to enrolling in a Tuition or Upgrade program. The campus data allow us to see the differences in entering literacy levels between these two different groups of Tuition and Upgrade students.

Students previously enrolled in LCTCS have higher literacy levels than those students whose first LCTCS experience was in a Tuition or Upgrade program. Exhibit 6 shows that students who took the TABE before enrolling in a Tuition or Upgrade program were more likely to score at the highest grade level in each subject than those testing after program enrollment (48 vs. 44 percent in reading, 54 vs. 50 percent in language, and 35 vs. 31 percent in math). This shows that the Tuition and Upgrade students previously enrolled in LCTCS have somewhat higher literacy levels than the students who first came to LCTCS to enroll in a TANF program. It indicates that low-income adults served by this program have different literacy levels and may require different types of services to be able to acquire high-wage employment.

Exhibit 6
TABE Achievement Among TANF Initiatives Participants
 All Program Years (2001-2004)

	Number of Students	Percent Testing at Grade Level:		
		Below 6	6 to 10	11 to 12
<u>All Students</u>				
Previously Enrolled in LCTCS	368			
Reading		7.9	43.8	48.4
Language		16.0	29.9	54.1
Math		15.5	49.7	34.8
Not Previously Enrolled in LCTCS	115			
Reading		9.6	46.1	44.4
Language		19.1	31.3	49.6
Math		15.7	53.0	31.3

Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS administrative data from seven campuses

Note: Previously Enrolled represents students who took the TABE three or more months before program enrollment. Not Previously Enrolled report students taking the TABE between two months before and after program enrollment. All other students are excluded.

Fields of Study

Both Tuition and Upgrade students are concentrated in a small number of fields of study. Exhibit 7 below shows the fields of study chosen by Tuition and Upgrade students over the past three years. The largest proportion of both Tuition and Upgrade students (31 and 42 percent respectively) have been enrolled in health related fields such as Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.), Emergency Medical Technician, and Phlebotomy. A large number of Tuition students (19 percent) choose business related fields such as accounting and office systems. Other common fields of study for Upgrade students include computer skills (12 percent) and customer service (19 percent), which typically includes programs that train students for work in the hotel and tourist industry and in customer telephone support for a number of different companies

Exhibit 7		
Field of Study for all Participants		
All Program Years (2001-2004)		
<u>Field of Study</u>	Tuition Students (a)	Upgrade Students (b)
Total Students Reporting Major	2,091	3,842
 <u>Percent With Major Field</u>		
Vocational	2.7	9.8
Computer	4.3	12.1
Health	30.7	42.4
Science	5.3	0.0
Education	4.1	7.0
Business administration	19.2	7.5
Customer service	1.5	18.6
Other	32.2	2.6

(a) BPA calculations from LCTCS administrative data from seven campuses
 (b) Based on enrollment projections taken from approved Upgrade lists 2001-2004

Notes:
 Vocational - AC refrigeration, welding, auto mechanics, engineering, carpentry, electrical, electronics
 Computer - Computer information, computer networking
 Health – Dietician, paramedic, pharmacy tech, medical assistant, nursing (C.N.A, LPN), phlebotomy, dental hygiene, nuclear medicine
 Science - Science
 Education - Early childhood, teacher's aide
 Business Administration - Accounting, administration and office systems, business management, legal secretary
 Customer Service - Customer service, hospitality

Tuition students remain in their programs for a longer period of time than their Upgrade counterparts. Upgrade programs are designed to be short-term skills training that lead to immediate employment, while Tuition students typically stay enrolled in their programs for longer periods of time. Exhibit 8 displays the length of time that Tuition and Upgrade students are enrolled in a TANF program. On average, Tuition students spend nearly six months in their programs while Upgrade students remain for about four months. As Exhibit 8 also indicates, about 60 percent of Upgrade students spend three months or less in their respective programs, and only six percent remain for one year or longer. This difference is likely due to the fact that Tuition students are more likely to be enrolled in longer-term programs that lead to Associate’s Degrees, while the majority of Upgrade students enroll in short-term certificate programs. Indeed, as Exhibit 2 showed earlier, more than 39 percent of Tuition students aspire to earn a two or four-year degree, while the majority (57 percent) of Upgrade students seek short-term employment certificates.

Exhibit 8			
Number of Months in TANF Program			
All Program Years (2001-2004)			
	<u>Tuition</u>	<u>Upgrade</u>	<u>All Students</u>
Average Months in Program	5.6	3.9	5.3
<u>Percent with Program Duration</u>			
Less than 1 month	4.5	10.6	5.7
Two months	15	25.8	17.1
Three months	16	23	17.4
Four months	22.4	11.2	20.2
Five months	9.1	9.9	9.3
Six months	8.3	6.9	8.0
Seven months	2.3	1.9	2.2
Eight months	5.2	1.1	4.3
Nine months	2	1.4	1.8
Ten months	1.6	0.5	1.4
Eleven months	2.8	1.7	2.6
Twelve months	1.2	1.3	1.2
Thirteen months or more	9.7	4.8	8.7
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>7,023</i>	<i>1,747</i>	<i>8,770</i>
Source: BPA Calculations from LCTCS Web-based data			

Workplace Literacy Participation

Almost all program participants take part in the workplace literacy component.⁵ However, many are not meeting minimum participation standards in terms of assessments taken or time spent in the program. These standards require all participants to successfully complete the three core WorkKeys assessments, and complete 45 hours of workplace literacy instruction. The all-campus survey identified several reasons for workplace literacy non-participation, including the possibility that many employers are still unaware how to interpret the various WorkKeys credentials.

Nearly all Tuition and Upgrade students enroll in workplace literacy activities. In the second year of operation for the workplace literacy component (the program's third year overall), 4,495 Tuition students and 692 Upgrade students enrolled through May 2004.⁶ These totals represent all Upgrade students and 97 percent of students receiving funds through the Tuition component. Program policy requires TANF Tuition and Upgrade participants to take part in workplace literacy for at least their first semester while receiving TANF Initiative funds, and nearly all appear to be meeting this requirement.

Despite high participation numbers, the number of WorkKeys assessments taken by participants has failed to meet program requirements and policymakers' expectations. BPA analyzed data for 4,161 students who have participated in workplace literacy during the 2003-2004 program year, most of whom are Tuition students. Exhibit 9 presents participation data for all workplace literacy exiters. Fully one-third of component exiters failed to take all three core assessments while in WorkKeys, and only 22 percent took at least one additional assessment. These numbers indicate that many students exit WorkKeys without taking all three core assessments or any additional assessments. While respondents interviewed by BPA had different expectations of the number of assessments that students should complete, the minimum requirement and expectation is that all students take all core assessments and any other assessments suggested by students' occupational profiles.

Students also spend much less time than recommended in workplace literacy. Participants spend an average of 21 hours over the course of four and a half months in workplace literacy activities (see Exhibit 9 above).⁷ Participants' length of time spent in workplace literacy matches the program requirement that participants spend their first semester in workplace literacy (for Tuition students), but their hours represent only about half of the 45 hours that program planners suggest participants spend in the component.⁸ Only 10 percent of participants meet the 45-hour time commitment. Students that

⁵ The Workplace Literacy component consists of a Readiness Screening, WorkKeys assessments in nine work skill-related areas, and correlated software including Key Train, WIN, Aztec, and Plato to remediate students' skills in these areas. For more information on the Workplace Literacy component, please see Overview of Program Design, found in Appendix B.

⁶ From the May Monitoring Report, submitted by Workforce Commission to Division of Administration, 22 June 2004.

⁷ All campuses schedule participants into a non-credit WorkKeys course for 45 hours, and provide childcare and transportation assistance during this course in efforts to help participants meet the WorkKeys hours requirement.

⁸ This recommended time is equivalent to a typical three hour per week class for one semester.

Exhibit 9

Participation for Workplace Literacy Exiters

Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	Tuition Students	Upgrade Students	All Participants
Number of TANF Initiative participants in Workplace Literacy	3,588	355	4,161
Number of Workplace Literacy exiters (a)	2,631	175	2,888
Percent of Workplace Literacy participants that have exited	73.3	49.3	69.4
Percent taking core assessments:			
No assessments	19.3	25.7	20.7
One assessment	4.9	7.4	5.2
Two assessments	7.0	5.7	7.1
Three assessments	68.8	61.1	67.0
Percent taking at least one additional assessment	23.3	16.0	22.6
Average amount of hours spent in Workplace Literacy (b)	21.0	19.1	
Average duration of time between Workplace Literacy entry and exit dates (in months)	4.5	3.8	
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>2,631</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>2,888</i>

Source: BPA calculations based on WorkKeys data, June 2004

- (a) "Exiters" denotes WorkKeys participants that have exited the Workplace Literacy component due to meeting program requirements of participating in WorkKeys for at least 45 hours, meeting Workplace Literacy goals, exiting the TANF Initiative program, or another reason. Exiters may still be enrolled in the TANF Initiative program.
- (b) Sample size for these percentages is smaller because some participants did not have hours participated in the WorkKeys data. Sample sizes for these percentages are 2,148 for tuition students, 136 for upgrade students, and 2,327 for all TANF students.

meet their goals in less than 45 hours are not required to fulfill the time requirement, although they are strongly encouraged to continue to improve their skills. However, only 30 percent of the students who exit workplace literacy meet their established goals. This suggests that very little of the gap between actual hours and recommended hours spent in workplace literacy can be attributed to students exiting early after meeting their goals. As a result, the 45-hour participation requirement may need to be more strictly enforced so as to increase the number of students meeting their goals.

Recommendation #1:

Programs should enforce the program requirement that participants take all there of the core assessments and spend 45 hours in the workplace literacy component (unless meeting their goals early). This will enable a higher proportion of students to meet their established workplace literacy goals.

Barriers to Participation in Workplace Literacy

Most survey respondents point to students' lack of time and interest as a reason for non-progression in meeting workplace literacy goals (see Exhibit 10). To address this problem, program officials established a WorkKeys course at all LCTCS institutions this year to provide students with a set time to take part in WorkKeys. Additionally, having a structured class allows students to access childcare and transportation supports while pursuing workplace literacy. Survey and interview respondents note that many participants value and are interested in workplace literacy after they begin participating, but initially show opposition to participating in what they view as an extra requirement. Participants' low literacy levels are also listed as a major barrier to growth in work-related literacy attainment.

Exhibit 10			
Program Administrator Reports of Reasons for Student Non-Participation in Workplace Literacy Component			
All-Campus Survey of TANF Initiative Programs, April 2004			
	All Campuses	Community Colleges	Technical Colleges
	%	%	%
Students choose not to complete	79.1	75.0	80.0
Students' low literacy	69.8	50.0	74.3
Employer confusion over Work Keys	23.3	25.0	22.9
Staff's lack of time/LCTCS resources	2.3	0.0	2.9
<i>Sample size</i>	43	8	35

Source: BPA All-Campus Survey of Workplace Basic Skills and Retention Services Program. Respondents were primarily TANF Campus Contacts, although some Workplace Literacy Instructors also completed surveys. Survey administered April and May 2004.

Employer Awareness of Workplace Literacy

A number of campus and interview respondents report a lack of awareness among employers regarding the WorkKeys credential and the skills it signifies. In the second year of offering workplace literacy as part of the TANF Initiative, Workforce Commission staff, TANF Campus Coordinators, Workplace Literacy Instructors, and other LCTCS staff made extensive outreach efforts to educate employers about the meaning of the WorkKeys credential. However, a lack of understanding persists despite staff presentations at community group meetings, business and industry gatherings, and to government agencies and officials. The lack of widespread recognition and acknowledgement of the WorkKeys credential likely discourages many students from fully engaging in the workplace literacy component, and ultimately limits its role in helping them gain employment. Increasing employer awareness of the WorkKeys credentials, however, could increase students' participation in the workplace literacy component and enhance its value as an employment acquisition tool.

Employment/Education Action Plan

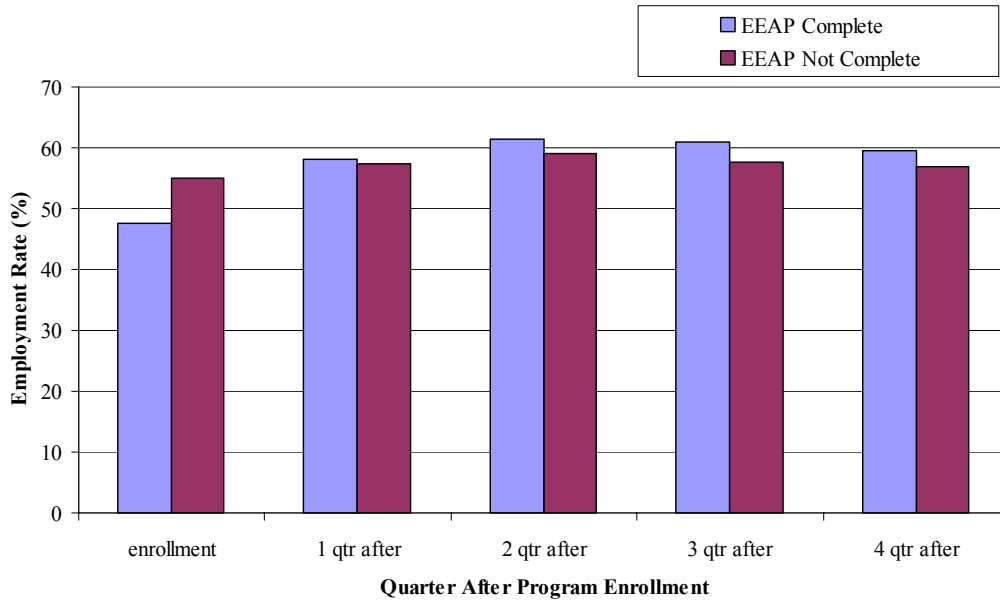
Despite the fact that most campuses reported a high EEAP participation rate, the majority of program participants do not complete an action plan. The EEAP is an ongoing process by which Tuition and Upgrade students work with program staff to declare their program goals and lay out concrete steps they can take to accomplish them. The process begins at intake when each student meets with the Workplace Literacy Coordinator to identify educational and employment goals. At this point the Workplace Literacy Coordinator records the results from the session and places them in the student's EEAP folder, which is referred to and updated throughout the student's tenure in the program. Program requirements stipulate that all Tuition and Upgrade students must complete the first EEAP session.

Program data show that only 41 percent of Tuition and Upgrade students completed an EEAP between 2001 and 2004. Completion of an EEAP entails developing a set of goals and documenting work experience and personal barriers, and is usually done during the initial EEAP session at intake. Tuition students are much less likely to have completed an EEAP than Upgrade students (36 vs. 60 percent). This discrepancy in EEAP completion between Tuition and Upgrade programs may be due in part to the fact that Upgrade programs often have dedicated TANF staff members serving a much smaller number of students.

Completion of the EEAP appears to be an effective tool in helping students gain employment. More than 70 percent of TANF Campus Coordinators reported that the EEAP is helpful in assisting TANF students gain employment, and employment data support this claim. Exhibit 11 depicts the employment rates for all Tuition and Upgrade students who have participated in the program during the past three years according to whether or not they completed the initial EEAP session. While both groups experience an increase in employment after joining the program, the EEAP completer group exhibits a somewhat steeper increase in employment. On the one hand, this points to the effectiveness of the EEAP as a tool in developing students' goals and helping them gain employment. On the other hand, however, EEAP completers exhibit lower employment rates upon program entry, and therefore stand to benefit more from the guidance provided by the EEAP. The slight differential in employment gains between these groups may simply be the result of students who need the EEAP less choosing not to complete it, and those who need it more seeking to complete it more often. Overall, the EEAP appears to enable students with low employment rates upon entrance to achieve parity with those who enter at a higher rate of employment.

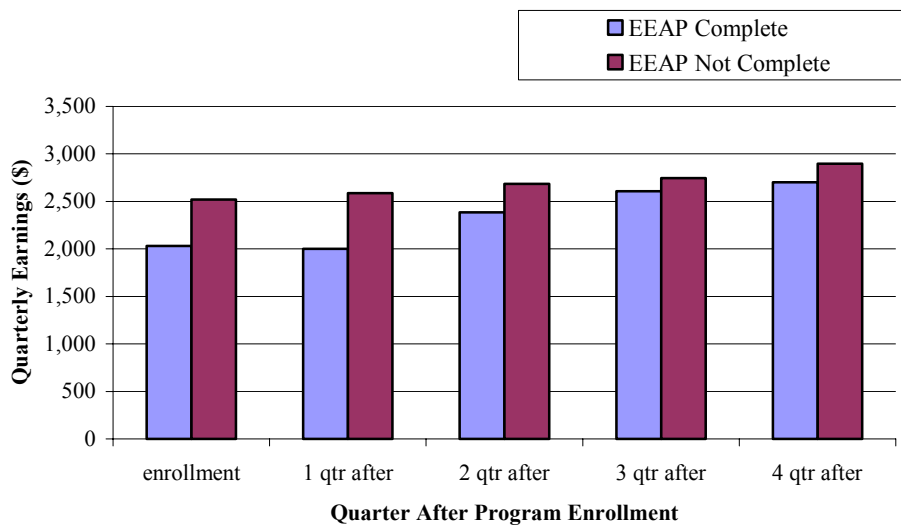
The EEAP also appears to have a positive impact on the earnings levels of those participants who complete it. Exhibit 12 depicts earnings for EEAP completers and non-completers. While both groups experience a post-enrollment increase in earnings, those who completed an EEAP show a slightly steeper increase. Again, this could indicate that EEAPs are effective in guiding students' educational experiences and helping them get on the track to high-wage employment. However, as in the case of employment, the EEAP appears to enable those students who enter the program with lower earnings levels to achieve earnings parity with those who entered with higher earnings levels.

Exhibit 11
Employment Rate and EEAP Completion
 All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS web-based data.

Exhibit 12
Earnings and EEAP Completion
 All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS data.

Upgrade Program Implementation

Upgrade programs are intended to provide low-literate adults with short-term technical skills training. TANF staff typically design Upgrade programs with varying degrees of input from employers to determine which specific skills should be taught to participating students. As mentioned earlier, Upgrade programs are funded only if they prepare participating students for employment in a high-demand occupation. Employers must signify this by agreeing in advance to hire Upgrade students upon successful completion of the program.

Campuses make use of a wide variety of resources to identify high-demand occupations and design Upgrade programs. Exhibit 13 shows the frequency with which campuses make use of various resources in designing Upgrade programs. Virtually all of the surveyed campuses that offer Upgrade trainings report working with local employers in designing their Upgrade programs. While in many cases the campuses reach out to employers to solicit their input and advice on potential Upgrades, many campuses also report that it is not uncommon for local businesses to contact them with Upgrade proposals. This is consistent with several state-level officials' claim that more employers are becoming familiar with Upgrade programs and the types of skills and credentials their graduates possess.

Exhibit 13	
Strategies Used to Design Upgrade Programs	
<u>All-Campus Survey, April 2004</u>	
<u>Methods for Designing Upgrade Programs</u>	<u>Percent of Campuses Using</u>
Solicit information from employers	80.0
Employers contact them with requests/ideas	60.0
Work with the campus Industry Advisory Committee	70.0
Use LDOL or Workforce Commission employment projections	40.0
Don't know how Upgrades are high demand occupations are identified	23.3
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>10*</i>
Source: Survey of all LCTCS TANF Campus Coordinators	
* Only 10 of the 13 LCTCS campuses that offer Upgrades responded to the survey	

Other campuses make use of LCTCS resources in designing Upgrade programs. More than three-quarters of surveyed campuses report working closely with their campus' Industry Advisory Committee in locating high-demand employers and identifying potential Upgrade programs. This allows TANF programs to tap into the knowledge and expertise of Committee members who often have a great deal of experience designing similar programs for the campus vocational and technical programs.

Still other campuses consult various Louisiana state government resources in identifying potential high-demand occupations. On a semi-regular basis, the Louisiana Occupational Forecasting Conference (OFC) submits a report to the Workforce Commission that provides official information on long-term job growth and demand.⁹ This report contains a detailed, comprehensive list of all the top demand occupations at both the state and regional levels, along with forecasts of their average annual salaries and the number of new jobs expected to be created in the next five years. In general, top demand occupations are those that exhibit the highest expected annual demand from a combination of job growth and replacement demand. According to state-level officials, however, only occupations in significant decline are excluded from the top demand designation. This often results in virtually every occupation being branded as "top demand," and makes it difficult to distinguish the truly high-demand occupations. About half of the surveyed Upgrade campuses report using these reports on a regular basis to inform their identification of high-demand occupations.

Nearly all of the Upgrade programs offered in year three correspond to "top demand" occupations. Exhibit 14 shows that more than 84 percent of the 19 different Upgrade programs are classified as top demand in their particular region, while only three programs do not have this classification. This may limit the ability of using this criterion as a tool in evaluating the employment prospects of Upgrade programs. That is, if virtually every occupation is considered top demand, then using this criterion alone to judge the quality of Upgrade programs may not be sufficient. A more objective criterion such as whether the program leads to a job with a livable wage may be more appropriate. Using both potential wages and "top demand" classification as the criteria for developing Upgrade programs will isolate the occupations with the strongest employment growth and ensure that participants become employed in industries in which they can advance and remain self-sufficient.

⁹ See <http://www.laworkforce.net/ofc/> for more information and for reports on high-demand occupations.

Exhibit 14
TANF Upgrade Programs 2003-2004
 Program Year Three (2003-2004)

Upgrade Title	Number of Programs	Listed in High Demand Occupations?
Certified Nursing Assistant	6	Yes
Patient Care Technician	2	Yes
Office clerical	2	Yes
Customer service	1	Yes
Phlebotomy	1	Yes
Network cabling	1	Yes
Welding and cutting	1	Yes
Health Unit Coordinator	1	Yes
Paralegal basic	1	No
Medical coding	1	No
Film (TANF 2)	1	No
Substitute Teaching/Teacher's Aide	1	Yes
Total Number of Upgrades	19	
Percent of Programs that are High Demand	84.2	

* Two other Upgrade programs were offered that did not provide training. An Upgrade with the Department of Transportation provided current DOT with Work Keys Assessments, and four campuses received Upgrade funding to expand their childcare provision capabilities

Source: BPA comparisons of 2003-2004 approved Upgrades with the 2004 OFC list of top demand occupations

Many of the Upgrade programs offered during the 2003-2004 academic year appear to lead to jobs with the potential for livable wages. Exhibit 15 shows all of the Upgrades offered in 2003-2004 along with the average full-time salary listed by the OFC for the occupation with which they are associated. Exhibit 15 also shows the earnings levels in these occupations as a percent of the 2004 federal poverty threshold for a three-person household.¹⁰ While more than half of the 19 Upgrade programs correspond to jobs that pay salaries above poverty the poverty level, it is unclear if these income levels are sufficient to enable participants to adequately support their families.

¹⁰ Federal Register. February 13, 2004. volume 69, number 30. pp. 7335-7338.

Berkeley Policy Associates
Evaluation of Tuition Services and Skills Upgrade Programs

The majority of Upgrade students enroll in programs that offer earnings above the poverty level. Exhibit 15 shows the number of students projected to enroll in each Upgrade program.¹¹ Nearly three-quarters of Upgrade students enroll in programs that correspond to a high demand occupation that offers an earnings level above the poverty level. Many of these high-earnings Upgrades are in health fields such as Patient Care Technician, Phlebotomy, and Health Unit Coordinator, and offer a more advanced skill set and career track than the more popular C.N.A. Upgrade program. Workforce Commission and LCTCS officials have encouraged campuses to develop more advanced Upgrades such as these that offer higher earnings and advancement potential.

Exhibit 15				
TANF Upgrade Programs				
Program Year Three (2003-2004)				
Upgrade Title	Number of Programs	Number of Students Enrolled	Average Potential F/T Salary (\$)	Average F/T Salary as a % of 2004 Federal Poverty Level for 3-person household (\$)
Certified Nursing Assistant	6	105	14,052	90
Patient Care Technician	2	25	19,710	126
Office clerical	2	130	19,657	125
Customer service	1	120	23,730	151
Phlebotomy	1	40	19,710	126
Network cabling	1	15	34,121	218
Welding and cutting	1	10	31,323	200
Health Unit Coordinator	1	15	25,385	162
Paralegal basic	1	25	-	-
Medical coding	1	20	-	-
Film (TANF 2)	1	-	-	-
Substitute Teaching/Teacher's Aide	1	20	13,215	84
Total	19	525		
Average Potential F/T Salary (\$)	19,408			
Percent of High Demand Programs Above Poverty	56.3			
Percent of Participants in Programs Above Poverty	74.0			
<p>* Two other Upgrade programs were offered that did not provide training. An Upgrade with the Department of Transportation provided current DOT with Work Keys Assessments, and four campuses received Upgrade funding to expand their childcare provision capabilities. Source: BPA comparisons of 2003-2004 approved Upgrades with the 2004 OFC list of top demand occupations</p>				

¹¹ These enrollment figures were taken from the LCTCS April 2004 list of approved Upgrade programs, and reflect the number of students estimated to enroll when the program was originally proposed. Some of the data are incomplete and may not reflect actual Upgrade enrollment.

Some of the most commonly offered Upgrade programs still offer very low wages despite corresponding to top demand occupations. Exhibit 15 shows that both the C.N.A. and Teacher's Aide Upgrades lead to earnings levels substantially below what a three-person household needs to be self-sufficient. Moreover, these programs constitute more than one-third of the 19 Upgrade programs offered in year three and were projected to serve more than 25 percent of Upgrade students. While these programs enable participants to gain entry into professions to which they would not otherwise have access, their low initial earnings potential points to the need to add more Upgrade programs that focus more on career advancement rather than entry-level skills.

Recommendation #2:

In addition to the OFC "top demand" classification, programs should use potential wages as a criterion for developing Upgrade programs, so as to ensure that participants enter occupations with strong advancement and earnings potential.

Recommendation #3:

Develop more advanced Upgrade programs that offer the potential for career advancement beyond entry-level positions. This would enable participants who begin at low earnings levels to advance to higher earnings level in a short time period.

Support Services Implementation

Our study also examines the ways in which LCTCS campuses provide support services to their Tuition and Upgrade students. These services include childcare, adult education, transportation, and career counseling, and represent an important component of both Tuition and Upgrade programs. While not formally required to do so, many programs have chosen to establish varying degrees of partnerships with other agencies in providing these support services. BPA's program survey asked TANF Campus Coordinators to rate the extent of their relationships with providers of support services, if any. Responses range from no partnership at all to formal working partnerships where Tuition and Upgrade clients are allocated a certain number slots in the provision of the partner agencies' services.

Campuses are most likely to maintain partnerships with childcare providers, perhaps in attempts to boost low utilization of childcare reimbursement payments. Nearly one-fifth of TANF programs report having formal partnerships with childcare providers where their clients are allocated a specific number of slots on a regular basis. Forty-three percent of TANF Initiative programs report providing information and referring clients to childcare providers, while only about one-third indicate that they

have no relationship at all with childcare providers. Despite these partnerships, only 23 percent of participants utilize childcare reimbursements.

A number of campuses maintain close collaboration with adult education agencies. Nearly one-fifth of TANF programs have established a formal partnership with an adult education agency where their clients are automatically enrolled. Nearly 50 percent of TANF programs make regular referrals to adult education agencies without a formal partnership, and about only one-third of them have no relationship at all with adult education providers.

Campuses are least likely to maintain formal relationships with transportation service providers. More than two-thirds of TANF Initiative programs have no relationship at all with transportation providers, while about 25 percent of them simply inform their students of and refer them to these organizations. With more than 87 percent of participants utilizing transportation payments, many campuses may feel that additional partnerships to encourage transportation services are unnecessary.

Implementation of Web-Based Data System

Problems with program data, such as incomplete program utilization data, assessment and course information, and incomplete demographic data, complicate attempts to gain a full understanding of whom the program is serving. The Workforce Commission and LCTCS designed and implemented a web-based data collection system to track program participation. Maintained at each campus, students' demographic information as well as program utilization records are recorded in an electronic database accessed via the Internet. This system became fully operational in September 2002, but has experienced lingering data entry difficulties. All respondents in BPA's program survey indicated that they used the system. Several pointed to an overly complicated system design and lack of time to enter student records as major barriers to entering data in the system. Interview respondents in previous years have mentioned design problems such as a malfunctioning delete option and default variable values that caused some data from the system to be non-representative of the actual student population. Additionally, since only some fields in the system are required for campuses to receive reimbursement for participants, the comprehensiveness of these data fields is greater than for optional fields. The Workforce Commission and LCTCS state and regional staff have trained campus staff on system use and have been available to troubleshoot when needed, but problems with student data records remain. Inaccurate data prevent researchers and practitioners from fully understanding program participants' backgrounds and needs, utilization of services, and program achievements.

Recommendation #4:

Programs should revise their web-based data collection processes to improve the accuracy of program data. First, all default values should be set to missing so as to clearly identify complete and incomplete fields. Second, data on prior LCTCS enrollment, degree progress, and assessment scores should be added to the web-based system and collected from the general LCTCS campus database. Third, Field Coordinators and program staff should reconcile the web-based, WorkKeys, and monthly Monitoring Reports data to obtain an accurate program enrollment count.

Program Outcomes

Our analysis of employment, educational, and work-related literacy outcomes show that participants in the Tuition and Upgrade programs experience important gains in all of these areas. Specifically, earnings for program participants rise substantially after program entry, and participants' employment rate, which is already high, remains so. Only a small number of participants go on to gain degrees or other LCTCS certification, but those who do display greater earnings than their non-degreed counterparts. A majority of workplace literacy participants earned a Work Ready Certificate, and low literacy students demonstrated notable gains in work-related literacy as well. While program participation should not be regarded as the sole influence on these positive achievements, it is an important contributor to significant gains in work preparedness and improvements in employment outcomes for the program's low-income adults.

Employment Outcomes

This section examines the employment outcomes exhibited by Tuition and Upgrade students before and after program enrollment. The major goal of the Basic and Technical Skills Training program is to prepare low-income parents so that they can improve their employment situations. The program aims to train participants in technical and workplace skills so they can gain and retain employment and advance their careers and increase earnings.

Below, we examine various measures, including earnings trends, rate of employment, and job retention, as a means to identify possible effects of the program on participants' employment prospects. We next report on utilization of services at LCTCS campuses that assist participants in gaining employment. Lastly, we discuss identified barriers that remain for participants in gaining and holding employment.

We conducted the analysis of employment outcomes using program enrollment and participation data maintained by the Workforce Commission, LCTCS, and U.S. Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance (UI) earnings data for Louisiana employees.¹² In order to measure program effects over a period of time, we primarily report outcomes for Initiative participants for whom earnings data is available for at least four quarters after program enrollment. We measure progress in students' outcomes based on their program enrollment date. Any program participation is thought to have at least some impact on participants. Also, program exit dates are not available for many participants, both because many have not yet exited and because campuses often fail to enter this data. Participants' average enrollment in the program is just over five months, so by focusing on participants with four subsequent quarters of data we can measure exit outcomes for the majority of participants.

Earnings Before and After Program Enrollment

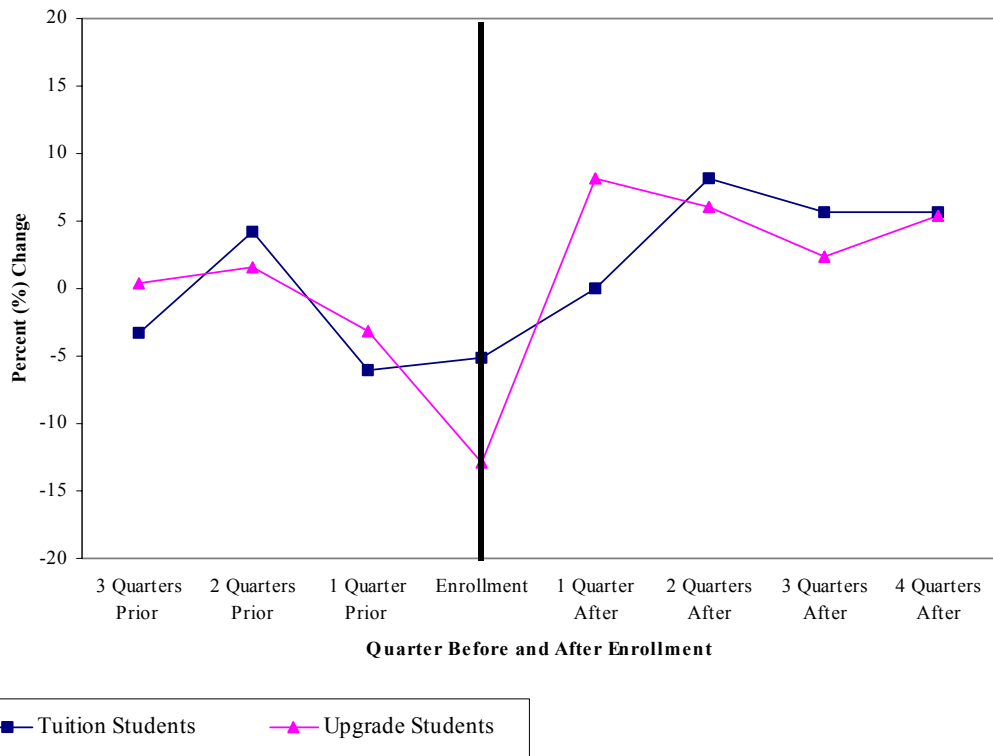
Earnings patterns for employed participants increase steadily after enrollment.¹³ As Exhibit 16 shows, average earnings for employed participants decline sharply in the year prior to program enrollment. This decline in pre-program earnings is consistent with research, which finds that workforce-training participants typically exhibit decreased earnings prior to program entry.¹⁴ Researchers note that anxiety experienced by participants with decreasing earnings combined with program staff who target potential students who need to improve their employment situations contribute to this tendency of enrolling students with declining earnings.

¹² Web-based data includes 9,897 records of TANF Initiative participants from Years 1 through 3 of the program. However, the web-based data collection system was not operational until September 2002 and thus it is expected that some participants are not captured in these data. This may limit the ability to generalize from these findings. UI wage records used in this analysis are through December 31, 2003.

¹³ These figures represent all participants who are employed during a quarter.

¹⁴ Ashenfelter, O., Card, D. 1985. Using the longitudinal structure of earnings to estimate the effect of training programs. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 67, 648-660.

Exhibit 16
Growth in Average Quarterly Earnings Before and After Program Entry
Employed Participants with Four Quarters of Data Post-Program Entry
 All Program Years (2001-2004)

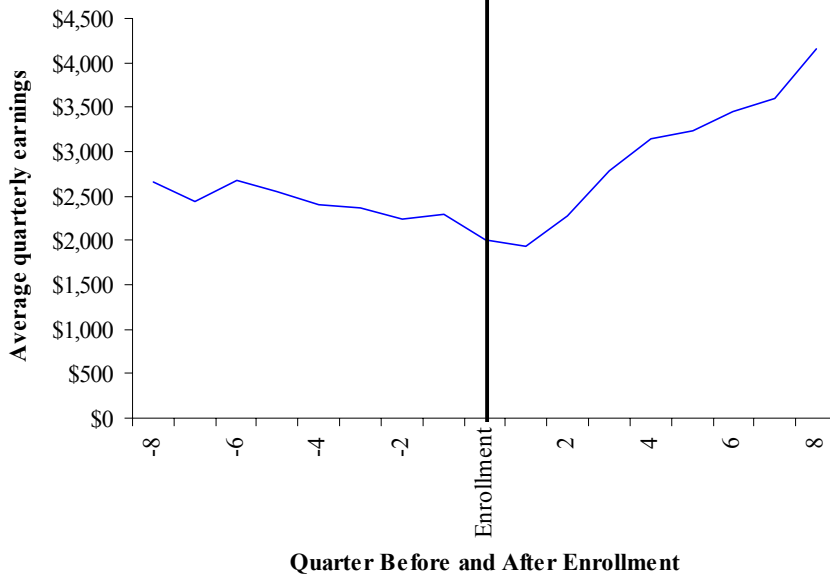


Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS data.
 Sample size is between 102 and 137 employed participants.

Earnings grow each quarter for program participants, and by the third quarter after program enrollment their average earnings surpass that which they received at any point in the year before enrollment. As exhibit 16 shows, four quarters after program enrollment, both Tuition and Upgrade students experience quarterly earnings growth of more than five percent. Earnings increases could be due to any of the following reasons: 1) participants may be working a greater number of hours, 2) participants may be holding employment at a more steady rate (e.g., retaining a job rather than working for short intervals), or 3) participants may be earning higher hourly wages. All of these reasons represent positive changes for program participants.

Longer-term outcomes show even greater potential of the program to increase earnings for participants that are working. Earnings outcomes for two years can be seen for a small number of participants who enrolled during the program's first semester of operation in Fall 2001.¹⁵ Earnings for these participants increase each quarter. Two years after program entry, employed participants' wages are more than twice average wages for employed participants during the enrollment quarter (see Exhibit 17). Employed participants earn \$4,165 per quarter two years after program enrollment.

Exhibit 17
Average Quarterly Earnings Before and After Program Entry
Employed Participants With Eight Quarters of Data Post-Program Entry
All Program Years (2001-2004)



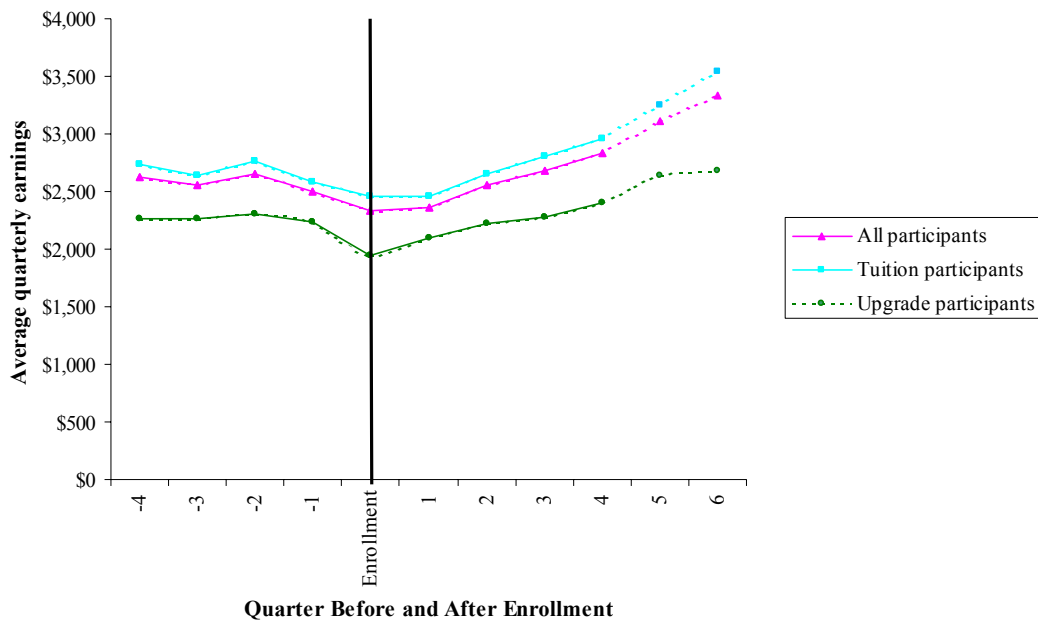
Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS data.
Sample size is between 102 and 137 employed participants.

Both Tuition and Upgrade students experience growth in average earnings, although they display slightly different trends over time. Exhibit 18 illustrates the similarity between employed Tuition and Upgrade students' trends in earnings, which decline prior to enrollment then increase each quarter following program enrollment. Upgrade students consistently average much lower earnings than Tuition counterparts. Upgrade students experience a greater increase in wages during the year after entering the program, while Tuition students' earnings growth rate far surpasses that of Upgrade

¹⁵ There are between 102 and 129 employed participants in each of the eight quarters.

students a year and a half after program entry (see Exhibit 19).¹⁶ This slightly different pace in earnings growth may be connected to the fact that, on average, Tuition students spend more time in their programs (six months), than do Upgrade students (four months). Since Upgrade students tend to finish earlier with training requirements, they are able to take on a fuller workload and thus potentially increase overall earnings sooner than Tuition students.

Exhibit 18
Comparison of Average Quarterly Earnings for Tuition and Upgrade Participants
 All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS data.
 Note: Participants have at least four quarters of post-enrollment UI data, but some do not have fifth and sixth quarters of data. Therefore the sample size decreases. Sample size ranges between 1,115 and 2,055 participants.

¹⁶ Five and six quarters post-enrollment report a slightly different group than the earnings group four quarters before and after. The latter cohort described is those for whom at least four quarters of data are available after program entry; those of this group with a fifth and sixth quarter of data are also reported for those quarters. However, mean earnings may be different for the entire cohort were six quarters of post-program data available for all of the participants.

Exhibit 19
Growth in Average Quarterly Earnings for Tuition and Upgrade Participants
Employed Participants With At Least Four Quarters of Data Post-Program Entry
 All Program Years (2001-2004)

	<u>Tuition</u> <u>Participants</u>	<u>Upgrade</u> <u>Participants</u>
First quarter after entry	\$2,454	\$2,101
2nd Quarter	\$2,655	\$2,227
3rd Quarter	\$2,804	\$2,281
4th Quarter	\$2,964	\$2,404
5th Quarter	\$3,255	\$2,636
6th Quarter	\$3,547	\$2,675
Earnings Growth		
over four quarters	20.7%	23.7%
over six quarters	44.4%	37.7%

Source: BPA calculations based on DOL Unemployment Insurance Wage Records and LCTCS/Workforce Commission web-based data.

Note: In the fifth and sixth quarters after program entry, data for some participants is not available. For quarters 1-4 after entry, between 2,017 and 2,092 participants are included (variation is due to number of participants employed during the quarter. Quarter 5 includes 1,747 participants and Quarter 6 reports on 1,115 total participants.

This earnings differential between Tuition and Upgrade students may be explained in part by the large number of C.N.A. Upgrade trainings, which generally prepare students for low-wage jobs in the nursing industry. Over the course of the Initiative's three years, C.N.A. Upgrades have been a popular offering by many campuses and have trained approximately one-third of Upgrade students. However, as discussed earlier, expected annual earnings in this field are below the poverty level for a family of three, likely driving down Upgrade students' average earnings (see Exhibit 15 above).

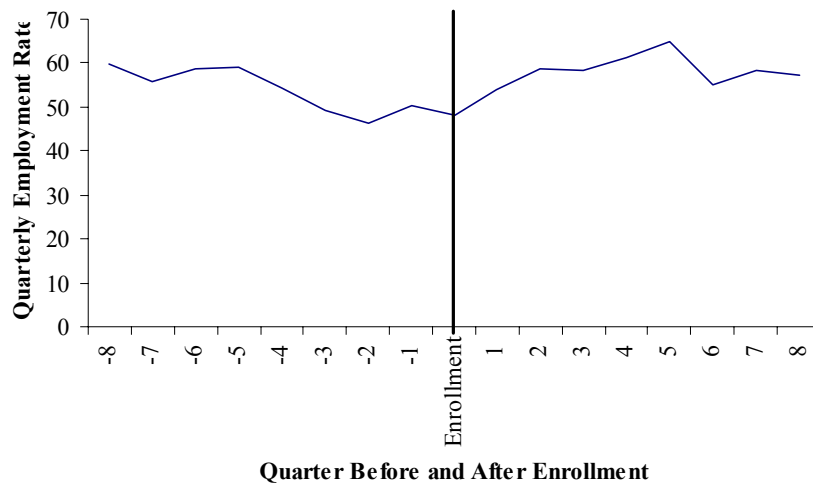
Employment Rates Before and After Program Participation

Data show no lasting change in participants' employment rate after entering the Tuition and Upgrade programs. Exhibit 20 shows that the employment rate for all participants declines from one year prior to entrance through the quarter of enrollment. At enrollment, just over half of participants are employed, again demonstrating a financial motivation to enroll in Tuition and Upgrade programs.¹⁷

¹⁷ Participants are counted as employed if they have \$100 or more in reported UI earnings for that quarter. Some participants may have received non-reported earnings, meaning that the true number of participants employed is likely higher.

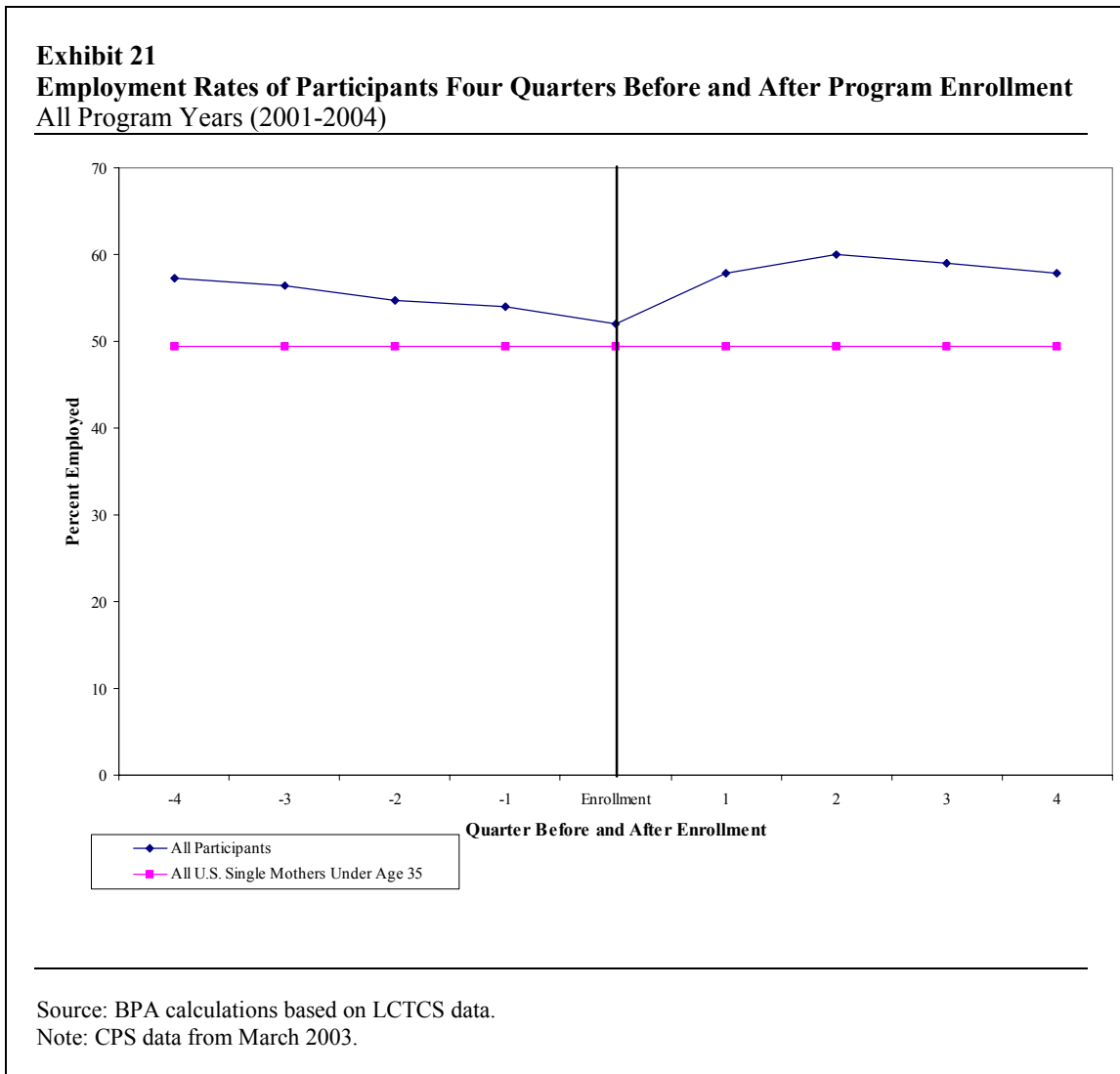
Participants have a slightly higher rate of employment for all quarters post-enrollment than during the year prior to enrollment. Employment in the first quarter after entrance is 58 percent, exceeding a target established by program planners that 55 percent of all participants will keep or attain employment within the first quarter after exiting. Two quarters post-enrollment marks the highest rate of employment for participants, with 60 percent posting earnings during this quarter. Participants with eight quarters of data also exhibit no sustained change in the numbers of participants employed as, shown in Exhibit 20.

Exhibit 20
Employment Rate Before and After Program Enrollment
Participants with Eight Quarters of Data Post-Program Entry
All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS data.
Sample size is 211 participants.

Tuition and Upgrade students exhibit high employment rates when placed in a national context. As Exhibit 21 shows, data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) indicate that about half of single mothers under age 35 nationwide are employed (as of March 2003).¹⁸ Tuition and Upgrade students, most of whom are young single mothers, enter their programs with and sustain employment rates at or near 60 percent. This demonstrates the already high employment rates of entering Tuition and Upgrade students and points to the limited room for improving upon them through any type of intervention.¹⁹



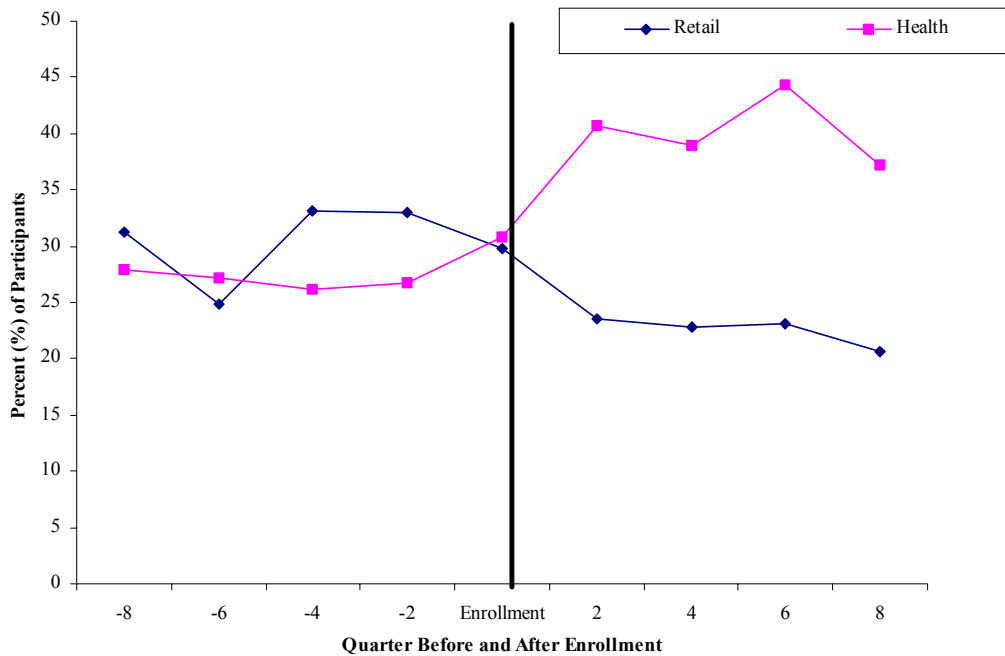
¹⁸ For more information, see <http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/sddperv.htm>.

¹⁹ Please note that the CPS data show employment at one point in time whereas program participants' employment rate is calculated over a quarter. For this reason, we would expect a quarterly employment rate to be higher than one taken at one point in time.

Industry of Employment Before and After Enrollment

The Tuition and Upgrade programs appear to enable participants to transition out of retail jobs and into jobs in the health industry. Exhibit 22 depicts the proportion of participants employed in the health and retail sectors both before and after enrolling in the program. These two sectors employ the largest number of participants both before and after enrollment. As Exhibit 22 shows, more than half of participants were enrolled in these two sectors before enrolling in the program, with retail usually accounting for more than 30 percent, and health around 25 percent of employed participants. After program enrollment, however, this pattern reverses completely, with the proportion of participants in health occupations rising sharply and the proportion in retail jobs declining dramatically. After enrollment as much as 45 percent of participants are employed in the health filed, while as little as 20 percent are employed in retail jobs. Moreover, this trend reversal continues for a full two years after program enrollment, suggesting that participants have the skills necessary to advance and sustain their employment in the health industry.

Exhibit 22
Industry of Employment Before and After Program Enrollment
Participants with Eight Quarters of Data Post-Program Entry
All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA tabulations of campus admin data and UI data
Sample size is 125 participants.

This suggests that program participants are moving into fields that offer more opportunities for advancement and higher earnings. As discussed earlier, program participants experience a significant increase in earnings that is sustained for two years after enrollment. This, combined with their dramatic transition from retail jobs to the health industry, suggests that the program is providing students with the skills necessary to acquire employment and advance within industries that offer higher earnings potential than the lower-paying retail jobs they occupied before entering the program.

Employment Retention

A majority of participants retain employment after program entry. Exhibit 23 shows that 67 percent of participants are employed in at least two of the four quarters after enrolling in the program, and 35 percent of participants are employed in all four quarters after enrollment.

Exhibit 23
Employment Retention During the Year Following Program Entrance
All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on UI data and LCTCS web-based data.
Sample size is 3,487 participants.

Not surprisingly, increases in earnings are noticeably greater for those continuously employed, pointing to the need to encourage retention in employment for program participants. As seen in Exhibit 24, those employed continuously see earnings increase \$471 from the first to fourth quarter. Those not employed in all four quarters but having earnings in the first and fourth quarters had increased average quarterly earnings of \$353.²⁰

Exhibit 24 Differences in Earnings Growth Based on Continuous Employment Employed Participants with Four Quarters of Post-Entry Data All Program Years (2001-2004)	
	Average difference in earnings between first and fourth quarters
Participants who were continuously employed	\$471
Participants who were not continuously employed	\$353
All Participants	\$451

Source: BPA calculations based on DOL Unemployment Insurance Wage Records and LCTCS/Workforce Commission web-based data. Sample size is 1,469 participants.

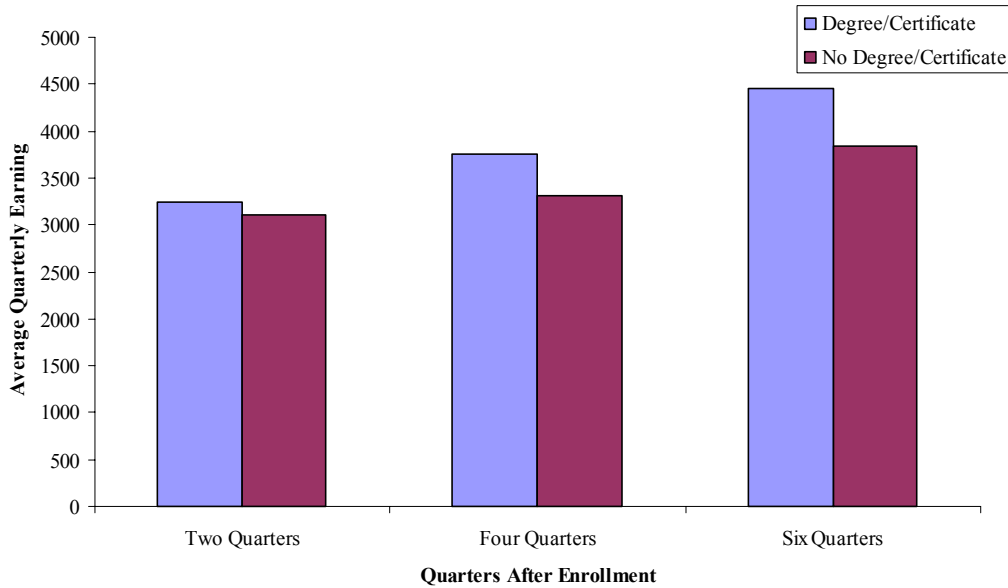
Degree Completion and Employment

Students who received a degree or certificate earn substantially more over time. Degree and non-degree earning students display almost identical average quarterly earnings two quarters after enrollment, which is expected since few participants at this point have likely earned a degree or certificate.²¹ Six quarters after program entry, however, participants who have received some type of degree or certificate earn about \$700 more per quarter, with degree recipients earning about \$4,400 per quarter and those without degrees earning around \$3,700 (see Exhibit 25). This difference is even greater for Tuition participants whose earnings surpass those of non-degree-earning Tuition students by nearly \$1,500. This discrepancy may also result participants’ differing levels of motivation, with those motivated enough to earn a degree or certificate also likely being more motivated and successful in the labor market.

²⁰ Only 17 percent of the sample of 1,469 employed participants in quarters 1 and 4 were not continuously employed.

²¹ The discussion of differences in employment outcomes based on degree receipt is based on data from a sample of LCTCS campuses which give degree information about enrolled students. These data are then matched with UI data as in the other employment outcome analysis we conducted.

Exhibit 25
Comparison of Quarterly Earnings by Degree Receipt
All Program Years (2001-2004)

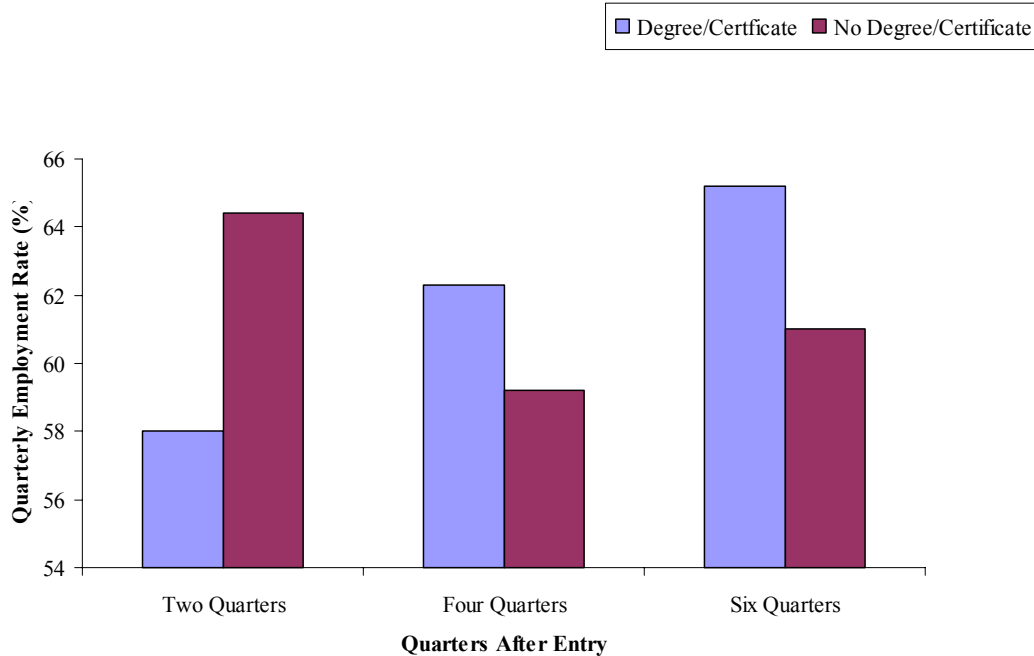


Source: BPA calculations based on UI data and LCTCS web-based data.

Note: Data presented are restricted to participants with at least six quarters of post-enrollment data. Sample size ranges from 118 to 435 students.

Tuition students who earn an LCTCS degree or certificate have both higher employment rates and earnings levels than those who do not earn a credential. Exhibit 26 shows that it takes a full year after enrollment for the receipt of a degree or certificate to lead to higher employment for Tuition students. Again, this is likely because it usually takes more than a year to earn a certificate or degree. Six quarters after program entry, however, Tuition students with a credential have an employment rate that is more than four percentage points greater than those without a credential. This suggests that for Tuition students, the receipt of a LCTCS degree or certificate does make a positive difference in the labor market.

Exhibit 26
Employment Rates by Degree Receipt for Tuition Students
All Program Years (2001-2004)

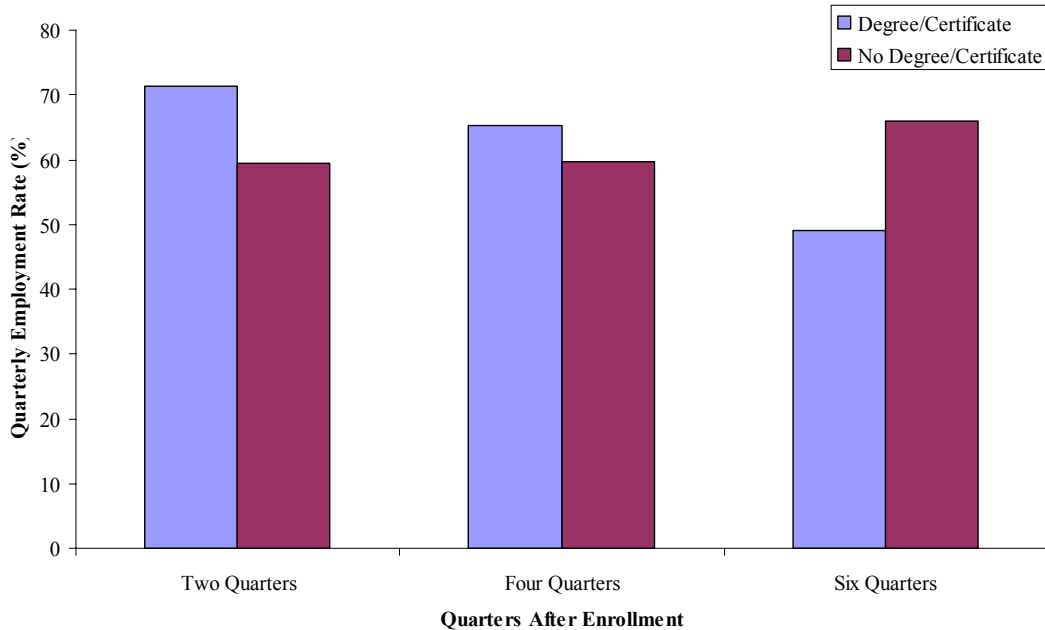


Source: BPA calculations based on UI data and LCTCS web-based data.

Note: Data presented are restricted to participants with at least six quarters of post-enrollment data. Sample size ranges from 69 to 388 Tuition students.

Upgrade students appear to benefit from the receipt of degrees and certificates in the short term only. Exhibit 27 shows that at both two and four quarters after program entry Upgrade students with a degree or certificate show higher employment rates than those without a credential. This suggests that the receipt of an LCTCS credential may enhance Upgrade students' ability to find employment through the first year after program entry. At six quarters after program entry, however, Upgrade students with an LCTCS credential actually exhibit a lower employment rate. This suggests that the credentials Upgrade students receive (usually certificates) may not have a lasting impact on their ability to find employment. Skills that Upgrade students learn may be enough to acquire entry-level positions but could be insufficient for advancement within their professions.

Exhibit 27
Employment Rates by Degree Receipt for Upgrade Students
All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on UI data and LCTCS web-based data.
Note: Data presented are restricted to participants with at least six quarters of post-enrollment data. Sample size is 49 Upgrade students.

While completion of a degree or certificate does the most to boost labor market outcomes, participants who do not complete one can still benefit from achieving some level of postsecondary education. A number of the studies that highlight the positive labor market effects of postsecondary degrees and certificates also point out that the completion of some college credits without a degree also leads to higher earnings and employment. Those who have some college education but no credential go on to experience higher earnings than those with a high school diploma or less, but only if they complete at least one year's worth of college credits.²² Moreover, those who complete some college credits go on to experience higher earnings only in occupations directly related to their field of study, while those who obtain a degree or certificate experience higher earnings in a wider range of occupations.²³

²² Grubb, W. Norton. 2002. Learning and Earning in the Middle, part I: National Studies of Pre-Baccalaureate Education. *Economics of Education Review*. No. 21(4). pp. 229-321.

²³ Grubb, W. Norton. 1999. The Economic Benefits of the Sub-Baccalaureate Education: Results From National Studies. CCRC Brief, June 1999. Community College Research Center, Teacher's College, Columbia University.

While TANF Tuition and Upgrade students clearly go on to experience higher earnings and employment, increasing the rate at which they complete degrees and certificates could improve their labor market outcomes even more. As discussed earlier, program participants have exhibited an overall increase in earnings and employment after enrolling in the program, despite more than 85 percent of them not earning a degree or certificate. But while program participation alone is effective in enhancing the employment pathways of a large number of participants, the even stronger labor market performance of those who obtain degrees and certificates suggests that more of a priority should be placed on ensuring that participants complete some type of postsecondary credential before exiting the program.

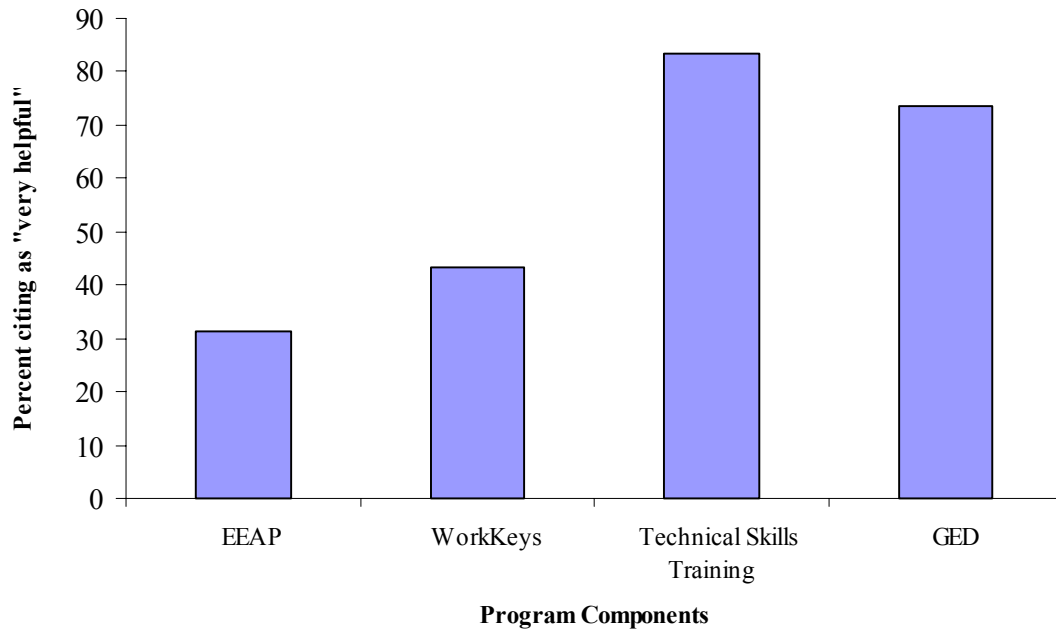
Recommendation #5:

Encourage more Tuition and Upgrade participants to obtain a degree or certificate during or after their time in the program. While program participation alone appears to produce positive employment outcomes, degree or certificate receipt will significantly improve the labor market prospects of both Tuition and Upgrade students.

Services to Improve Employment Prospects and Remaining Barriers to Employment

Campus respondents were asked about program components thought to be beneficial to students in gaining employment (see Exhibit 28). Most respondents pointed to the acquisition of technical skills and GED attainment as ‘very helpful’ to students in gaining employment. Only about half as many respondents rated WorkKeys or EEAP as ‘very helpful’.

Exhibit 28
Program Components Considered Very Helpful to Participants in Gaining Employment
All Program Years (2003-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS data.
Sample size is 37 respondents.

Continuing instability in participants' lives was the major reason cited as preventing students from gaining and maintaining employment. Survey respondents overwhelmingly cited students' personal problems or lack of interest in a job as a barrier to successful job placement. About half cited lack of available positions as a barrier. Very few survey respondents (8 percent) thought students face no barriers in gaining employment.

Exhibit 29
Perceived Barriers to Employment for Program Participants
 All-Campus Survey of TANF Initiative Programs, April 2004

	<u>All Campuses</u>	<u>Community Colleges</u>	<u>Technical Colleges</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Barriers to successful employment:			
Students' personal problems/lack of interest	81.6	100.0	77.4
Lack of available positions	44.7	42.9	45.2
Student lack of training	26.3	28.6	25.8
No barriers exist	7.9	0.0	9.7
<i>Sample size</i>	38	7	31

Source: BPA All-Campus Survey of Workplace Basic Skills and Retention Services Program. Respondents were primarily TANF Campus Contacts, although some Workplace Literacy Instructors also completed surveys. Survey administered April and May 2004.

Note: Percentages do not necessarily total 100 percent because respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.

Educational Outcomes

Our study also examines the educational outcomes achieved by Tuition and Upgrade students over the past three years. Overall, these programs seek to advance participants' education levels only insofar as it enhances their ability to become employed. As a result, programs prioritize short-term skills' training that leads to high-wage employment over longer-term instruction that leads to degree or certificate attainment. That said, one of the goals set out by the 2003 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Social Services and the Workforce Commission is that 50 percent of all Tuition and Upgrade students earn an LCTCS-recognized certificate, diploma, or degree during their tenure in the program. This section assesses the achievement of this goal by investigating the extent to which participants earn LCTCS credentials and advance their educational levels.

While educational advancement may be secondary to the program's employment related goals, the completion of credentials such as a GED, vocational certificate, and Associates degree leads to positive labor market outcomes. In particular, high school dropouts who complete a GED earn up to 15 percent more than dropouts who do not complete a high school credential,²⁴ and high school graduates who complete a community college degree or certificate go on to earn significantly more

²⁴ Tyler, John H., Richard J. Murnane, and John B. Willett. 2000. Estimating the Labor Market Signaling Value of the GED. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. No. 2. pp. 431-468.

than those who do not complete a postsecondary credential.²⁵ Moreover, high school graduates who complete one year's worth of community college credits earn four to seven percent more than those who have no postsecondary experience.²⁶ Lastly, as shown earlier, both Tuition and Upgrade students have realized the positive earnings benefits of earning an LCTCS degree or certificate.

Our data on student educational attainment come from multiple sources. First, seven different LCTCS campuses provided data on degrees and certificates earned by more than 3,000 Tuition and Upgrade students who have participated in the program over the past three years.²⁷ Second, we determined participants' educational level upon program entry and exit from the LCTCS web-based data system. This enabled us to determine not only the extent to which Tuition and Upgrade students earn LCTCS degrees and certificates, but also whether those not earning degrees are able to advance their education in other ways, such as completing some college credits or earning a GED.

Degree Receipt

Only a small proportion of Tuition and Upgrade students earn LCTCS degrees and certificates. Exhibit 30 shows that about 14 percent of all participants eventually earn an LCTCS degree or certificate. Because of the time required to complete a degree or certificate, this sample is restricted to those students who enrolled in a Tuition or Upgrade program between September 2001 and August 2003. While Upgrade students are more likely than Tuition students to earn a credential, only about 27 percent of them do so. Tuition students are also more likely to earn Associate's degrees while most Upgrade students earn certificates. Again, while these numbers fall well short of the goal set out by the MOU, they are likely due to participants' short duration in the program and, more importantly, the program's priority of preparing participants for employment. As discussed earlier, the greater labor market benefits of a degree or certificate suggest that encouraging more students to complete one should receive a high priority.

²⁵ Grubb, W. Norton. 2002. Learning and Earning in the Middle, part I: National Studies of Pre-Baccalaureate Education. *Economics of Education Review*. No. 21(4). pp. 229-321.

²⁶ Kane, Thomas J., and Cecilia E. Rouse. 1995. Labor Market Returns to Two- and Four-year College. *American Economic Review*. 85 (June): 600-614.

²⁷ These seven campuses are Baton Rouge Community College, Bossier Parish Community College, Delgado Community College, Natchitoches Technical College, Lafayette Technical College, Florida Parishes Technical College, and West Jefferson Technical College. These campuses provided data on field of study, degree/certificate receipt, and assessment scores for a total of 3,313 students. However, this was not designed to be a representative sample of the statewide student population.

Exhibit 30
Degree and Certificates Earned by TANF Students
 Program Years One and Two (September 2001 – August 2003)

Degree/Certificate Earned	<u>Tuition Students</u>	<u>Upgrade Students</u>	<u>All Students</u>
Total Students in Sample	1,568	539	2,107
Percent Earning a Degree or Certificate	9.1	26.9	13.6
Percent of Earners Completing the Following			
Associates Degree	62.0	0.7	31.0
Technical Competency Area	19.0	32.4	25.8
Certificate	19.0	66.9	43.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS administrative data from seven campuses

Educational Attainment

Participants who enter with a high school education are more likely to advance their education levels. Exhibit 31 shows that the largest proportion of Tuition and Upgrade students enter their programs with a high school education or GED (46 and 60 percent). Most of the Tuition students in this group advance their education level to “some college” before exiting, while a small number (two percent) go on to acquire Associate’s degrees. Some college typically means that they complete some college classes and/or a certificate but do not earn a degree. Nearly 29 percent of Upgrade students who enter with a high school education advance to acquire some college education such as course credits or a certificate, while the remainder exit without advancing. This suggests that students who enter with at least a high school education have a better chance of advancing their education than the overall student population.

Exhibit 31
Entry and Exit Education Levels
 All Program Years (2001-2004)

Entry Education	Percent Entering At:	Percent Exiting At:			
		Associates Degree or Higher	Some College	High School or GED	Less Than High School
<u>Tuition</u>					
Associates Degree or Higher	1.3	60.9	39.1	0.0	0.0
Some College	37.1	3.2	94.8	1.6	0.2
High School or GED	46.3	2.1	55.4	40.7	0.0
Less Than High School	15.3	0.2	20.9	8.6	70.3
<u>Upgrade</u>					
Associates Degree or Higher	1.1	87.5	12.5	0.0	0.0
Some College	9.6	1.4	87.0	11.6	0.0
High School or GED	59.9	0.2	28.6	68.3	2.9
Less Than High School	29.0	0.4	10.8	9.9	79.4

Source: BPA calculations from LCTCS web-based data
 Sample size is 3,420 Tuition students and 758 Upgrade students

Students who enter with less than a high school education are more likely to bypass the GED in favor of pursuing college credentials. Exhibit 31 shows that 15 percent of Tuition students and 29 percent of Upgrade students enter their programs with less than a high school education. More than 70 percent of both of these groups exit without advancing their level of education. Among those in this group who do advance their education level, Tuition students are more likely to bypass earning a GED in favor of completing some college classes or earning a certificate. Upgrade students in this group are about equally likely to acquire a GED or some college credits.

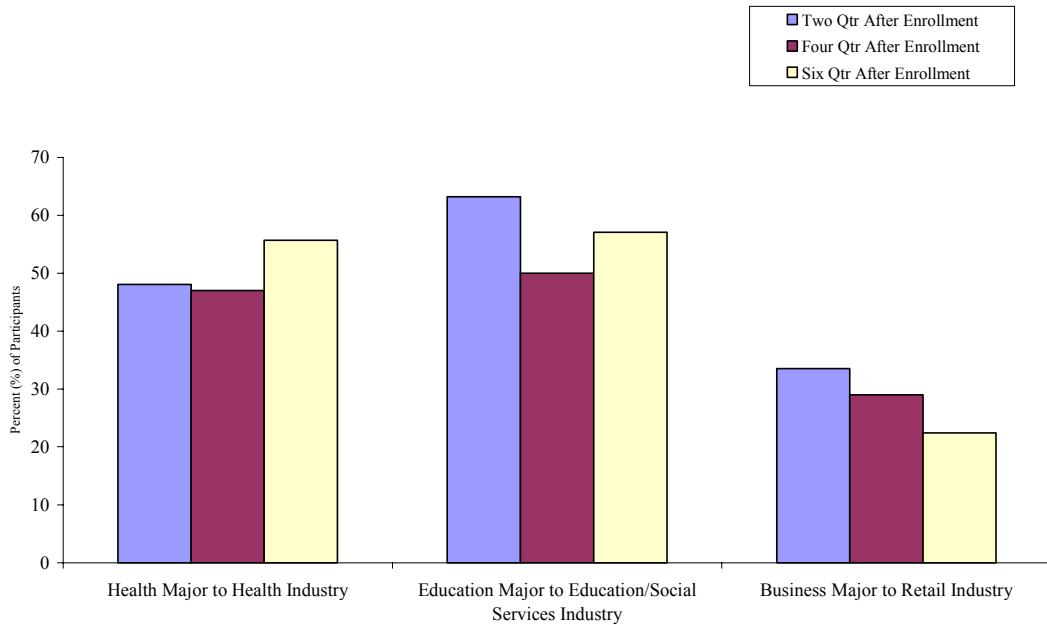
Initial goals appear to influence students' educational attainment during the program. As discussed earlier, Upgrade students are more likely to have employment and job-related certificates as their immediate goals, whereas Tuition students more often seek to acquire degrees and advance their levels

of education. These differing goals may orient Tuition and Upgrade students toward different paths that lead to different levels of educational attainment. Thus it is unclear if the goal of 50 percent degree receipt is an appropriate one. Most students come to the program with their sights set on higher paid jobs rather than higher degrees, and usually remain in the program for only a short period of time.

Field of Study and Industry of Employment

One of the major goals of any education or skills training program is to ensure that program graduates become employed in occupations that closely match their fields of study. This not only justifies the usage of the resources necessary to provide participants with skills training, but it also increases the likelihood that they will obtain and sustain high-wage employment. The largest number of Tuition and Upgrade students are enrolled in health and business related fields of study, with others in education and computer related fields. Exhibit 32 shows the proportion of students who eventually become employed in industries directly related to their major field of study. As it shows, around half of students enrolled in health programs become employed in the health industry, with the proportion increasing with time. Students in education programs are even more likely to find employment in their intended field, with as many as 63 percent of them becoming employed in the education industry. While the intended industry of employment for business students is more difficult to identify, more than 25 percent of them go on to become employed in the retail industry. This suggests that most of the students in the most popular fields of study are going on to put their skills to use in their intended areas of employment.

Exhibit 32
Major Field of Study and Industry of Employment After Program Enrollment
Participants with Six Quarters of Data Post-Program Entry
All Program Years (2001-2004)



Source: BPA calculations based on UI data and LCTCS administrative data.

Note: Data presented are restricted to participants with at least six quarters of post-enrollment data. Sample size ranges from 14 to 266 students.

Workplace Literacy Outcomes

The intention of the workplace literacy component is to assist students in achieving at least one of the following objectives: 1) documenting students' work readiness skills and literacy, particularly as these pertain to the participant's desired job, and 2) improving work-related literacy and skills. For the first objective, we discuss the achievements of all workplace literacy exiters.²⁸ To measure student

²⁸ BPA has data on approximately 80 percent of all workplace literacy participants this year. Data presented focus on students who have exited workplace literacy, since this provides a complete picture of participation in the component. Through May 2004, nearly three-quarters of Tuition students and half of Upgrade students enrolled in workplace literacy had exited. Participants exit workplace literacy for one of the following reasons: 1) met workplace literacy

progress in attaining workplace skills and literacy, we report improvements in the performance of those who initially received low scores on WorkKeys and Key Train.²⁹ BPA obtained individual-level WorkKeys records from all campuses and Key Train data from eight LCTCS campuses.³⁰ Below, we assess students' achievement and progress while participating, and report findings from our All-Campus survey regarding the workplace literacy component, particularly the usefulness of WorkKeys in gaining employment.

Student Achievement

Many students accomplished important objectives during their workplace literacy participation. Most participants taking various WorkKeys modules scored high on the WorkKeys assessments. Over 90 percent of Tuition and Upgrade students who exited workplace literacy initially score "Ready" on the Readiness Screening.³¹ Of participants taking the three core assessments only, nearly all score at level 3 or higher on the tests, as shown in Exhibit 33.³²

goals, 2) exit TANF Tuition or Upgrade program before meeting workplace literacy goals, or 3) exit workplace literacy component without meeting goals but remain in TANF program.

²⁹ Key Train is one of four training software programs used by TANF programs which assist students in improving skills in designated WorkKeys assessment areas.

³⁰ WorkKeys and Key Train data report students participating from August 2003 through May 2004. Campuses supplying Key Train records are Bossier Parish Community College, LTC Baton Rouge, LTC Lafayette, LTC Northwest, LTC Shreveport-Bossier, LTC Folkes, LTC Avoyelles, and Sowela Technical Community College. WorkKeys data include records for 4,161 TANF Tuition and Upgrade participants in workplace literacy. Key Train data include 335 participant records.

³¹ The Readiness Screening instrument determines students' readiness for WorkKeys assessments and identifies needed instruction.

³² TANF Initiative WorkKeys policy requires that participants score at least at level 3 or at his/her goal level on the core assessments to successfully complete this component. Since we do not have participants' goal levels, we use score level 3 to measure students' success and progress on the core assessments.

Exhibit 33
Achievement for Workplace Literacy Exiters
 Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	Tuition Students	Upgrade Students	All Participants
Number of Workplace Literacy exiters (a)	2,631	175	2,888
Percent scoring "Ready" on readiness screening	92.4	90.3	91.9
Percent that improved from "Not Ready" to "Ready" on readiness screening	60.2	66.7	59.1
Percent taking Applied Math that score 3 or higher	93.3	92.4	93.2
Percent taking Reading for Information that score 3 or higher	96.5	93.4	96.3
Percent taking Locating Information that score 3 or higher	87.3	78.9	87.0
Percent meeting all goals (b)	30.2	36.6	30.4
Percent earning a Work Ready Certificate	59.3	44.0	57.3
<i>Sample size (c)</i>	<i>2,631</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>2,888</i>

Source: BPA calculations based on WorkKeys data, June 2004

(a) "Exiters" denotes WorkKeys participants that have exited the Workplace Literacy component due to meeting program requirements of participating in WorkKeys for at least 45 hours, meeting Workplace Literacy goals, exiting the TANF Initiative program, or another reason. Exiters may still be enrolled in the TANF Initiative program.

(b) When students enroll in Workplace Literacy, individual achievement goals or scores to attain in each relevant module are set based on the occupational profile of students' intended career.

(c) Sample sizes for completers scoring 3 or higher on the assessments are smaller, since not all participants take the assessments. Sample sizes for these percentages range from 1,954-2,003 for tuition students, 114-121 for upgrade students, and 2,091-2,157 for all TANF Initiative students.

Exhibit 34 shows that more than half of all students earn a Work Ready Certificate, signifying that they achieved at least a score of 3 on the three core assessments. The Work Ready Certificate is a portable credential measuring skills in three core areas (applied math, reading for information, and locating information) that is based on actual job profiles. The Louisiana Workforce Commission intended that the Certificate signal to employers the skills current and prospective employees have relative to skills needed for their jobs, identify needed skill enhancements for employees so that they can progress on their career paths, and provide a recognized credential attesting to students' skills. More Tuition students (59 percent) than Upgrade students (44 percent) earn this credential. Of students earning a Work Ready Certificate, the largest proportion achieve a Silver Level, meaning they scored 4 or higher on the three assessments. Silver certificate holders have demonstrated skills for over half of the profiled WorkKeys jobs.

Exhibit 34
Percentages of Workplace Literacy Exiters Earning Work Ready Certificates
 Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	<u>Tuition Students</u>	<u>Upgrade Students</u>	<u>All Participants</u>
Percent earning a Work Ready Certificate	59.3	44.0	57.3
Percent achieving Bronze Level	21.3	14.9	20.6
Percent achieving Silver Level	31.8	22.3	30.6
Percent achieving Gold Level	5.3	5.1	5.2
<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>2,631</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>2,888</i>

Source: BPA calculations based on WorkKeys data, June 2004
 Note: "Exiters" denotes WorkKeys participants that have exited the Workplace Literacy component due to meeting program requirements of participating in WorkKeys for at least 45 hours, meeting Workplace Literacy goals, exiting the TANF Initiative program, or another reason. Exiters may still be enrolled in the TANF Initiative program.
 Note: Bronze signifies earning a score of 3 or higher on the 3 core WorkKeys assessments; Silver denotes scoring 4 or higher on the assessments; and Gold signifies participants have earned scores of 5 or higher on the 3 assessments. Some schools entered a date rather than a level earned when reporting date about Work Ready Certificate achievement, making it impossible to determine whether students had achieved Bronze, Silver, or Gold Certificates. These students are not included in the by-level reporting but are in overall Work Readiness Certificates awarded.

Only 30 percent of those who exit Workplace Literacy have met their goals.³³ This is considerably lower than the Initiative target that half of all TANF students meet workplace literacy goals.³⁴ This low attainment rate indicates that most students exiting workplace literacy may have unmet work-related literacy needs. Since we do not have access to students' goal levels, it is not clear why the rate of meeting program workplace literacy goals is so low, particularly given students' high levels of achievements when taking assessments. One reason may be simply that students have not taken some of the assessments that are part of their workplace literacy goal profiles, as discussed above. More work should be done to ensure that students take at least the three core components so that they can attempt to qualify for one of the WorkKeys credentials, such as the Work Ready Certificate or meeting their workplace literacy goals.

³³ Students meet with Workplace Literacy Instructors, who use a job profile in the student's chosen occupation to determine goal score levels on core and additional assessments.

³⁴ This target was established in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Workforce Commission and Department of Social Services.

Student Progress in Workplace Literacy

Students with low literacy levels demonstrate skill enhancements gained from workplace literacy that prepare them for employment opportunities. Very few students exit workplace literacy at low literacy levels, measured by scores below 3 on an assessment, even among those who enter with low literacy skills. Exhibit 35 shows that only a small proportion of exiting participants receive a score of below 3 on any of the core assessments, and of these, about 30 percent improve their scores to 3 or above. Only a small number of students exit with scores less than 3 on core assessments they have taken.

Exhibit 35
Improvements in Scores on Workplace Literacy Assessments for Program Exiters
Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	<u>Tuition Students</u>		<u>Upgrade Students</u>		<u>All Participants</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Percent with baseline scores on core assessments less than 3	13.2	2,631	17.7	175	13.3	2,888
Percent whose baseline test score was less than 3						
Applied Math	5.0	1,968	5.1	119	6.8	2,119
Reading for Information	2.7	2,003	4.6	121	3.7	2,157
Locating Information	9.4	1,954	13.7	114	13.0	2,091
Percent of these participants who improved scores from below Level 3						
Applied Math	31.1	132	33.3	9	31.0	145
Reading for Information	32.9	70	37.5	8	34.2	80
Locating Information	28.6	248	41.7	24	29.8	272

Source: BPA calculations based on WorkKeys data, June 2004

Note: "Exiters" denotes WorkKeys participants that have exited the Workplace Literacy component due to meeting program requirements of participating in WorkKeys for at least 45 hours, meeting Workplace Literacy goals, exiting the TANF Initiative program, or another reason. Exiters may still be enrolled in the TANF Initiative program.

Note: Baseline score denotes the first time students took an assessment. The degree to which this represents an actual baseline measure of students' abilities varies by campus.

Students entering workplace literacy with even lower literacy abilities also demonstrate an increase in skills as measured by WorkKeys assessments. A small proportion, less than ten percent of all students, score “Not Ready” on the readiness screening, which is a test of basic literacy before taking any WorkKeys assessments. A score of “Not Ready” signifies a low entering literacy level. As seen in Exhibit 36, about 60 percent of those initially scoring “Not Ready” on the screening eventually do improve to score “Ready” during their participation in workplace literacy. Among these participants, average scores on the core assessments are approximately one level below average scores for all participants (see Exhibit 37). However, these participants’ scores exceed level 3 or above on two of the three core tests. Twelve percent of participants who scored “Not Ready” eventually achieve a Work Ready Certificate, and 15 percent meet their goals, representing important achievements for these low literate participants. For participants with low literacy levels, having WorkKeys credentials may be even more valuable than for other participants in proving to employers that they have skills for the employment opportunities they are seeking.

Exhibit 36
Achievement for Low Literacy Workplace Literacy Exiters (a)
Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	<u>Tuition</u>	<u>Upgrade</u>	<u>All Participants</u>
Number that scored Not Ready on readiness screening	256	45	326
Percent that improved from "Not Ready" to "Ready" on readiness screening	60.2	66.7	59.1
Scores on 3 core assessments:			
Average Score on Applied Math assessment	3.0	2.8	3.0
Average Score on Reading for Information assessment	3.6	3.3	3.6
Average Score on Locating Information assessment	2.8	2.3	2.8
Percent meeting all goals (b)	14.6	11.1	14.6
Percent earning a Work Ready Certificate	11.1	11.1	11.6

Source: BPA calculations based on WorkKeys data, June 2004

"Exiters" denotes WorkKeys participants that have exited the Workplace Literacy component due to meeting program requirements of participating in WorkKeys for at least 45 hours, meeting Workplace Literacy goals, exiting the TANF Initiative program, or another reason. Exiters may still be enrolled in the TANF Initiative program.

(a) Low literacy is determined by those participants that initially scored Not Ready on the Readiness Screening Instrument, which measures student's literacy ability to successfully

(b) When students enroll in Workplace Literacy, individual achievement goals or scores to attain in each relevant module are set based on the occupational profile of students' intended career.

Exhibit 37

Average Scores on Core Assessments for Workplace Literacy Exiters
 Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	Tuition		Upgrade		All Participants	
	<u>Score</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>N</u>
Average Score on Applied Math for exiters (a)	4.2	1,969	4.0	119	4.2	2,119
Average Score for exiters initially scoring Not Ready	3.0	70	2.8	4	3.0	80
Average Score on Reading for Information for exiters	4.7	2,003	4.6	121	4.7	2,157
Average Score for exiters initially scoring Not Ready	3.6	79	3.3	4	3.6	87
Average Score on Locating Information for exiters	3.7	1,954	3.5	114	3.7	2,091
Average Score for exiters initially scoring Not Ready	2.8	68	2.3	4	2.8	76

Source: BPA calculations based on WorkKeys data, June 2004

Note: If participants had taken an assessment multiple times, the highest score was used in analysis. Highest possible scores on Applied Math and Reading for Information assessments are 7's; maximum score on Locating Information assessment is 6.

(a) "Exiters" denotes WorkKeys participants that have exited the Workplace Literacy component due to meeting program requirements of participating in WorkKeys for at least 45 hours, meeting Workplace Literacy goals, exiting the TANF Initiative program, or another reason. Exiters may still be enrolled in the TANF Initiative program.

Key Train data provide an additional measure of students' progress while participating in workplace literacy.³⁵ Since Key Train is used for remediation in subjects in which students need improvement, changes in students' performance on Key Train provide a valuable assessment of the change in students' skill levels. BPA received Key Train data from a sample of eight LCTCS campuses. These students had taken an average of 3.5 Key Train modules through May.³⁶

³⁵ According to established Workplace Literacy program procedure, a participant works on Key Train or another training software that correlates students' training programs with skills needed to obtain the desired score levels on assessments in which participants need improvement. When the training software indicates that the participants are performing at goal levels, they retake the WorkKeys assessments. BPA utilized the following fields from the Key Train data to evaluate student progress: participants' goal levels, initial student score levels, and current score levels (through the end of May when Key Train data were collected).

³⁶ Key Train modules correspond to the three core WorkKeys assessment areas, the six additional assessment areas, and three basic subject areas that prepare students for the Readiness Screening.

Students participating in Key Train experience noticeable improvements in their scores in all subject areas.³⁷ As shown in Exhibit 38, all students average an improvement of nearly one score level while using this software training, and more than half of Key Train students meet their goal levels (which correspond to WorkKeys goal levels).³⁸ Additionally, one-third of participants have scored above their goal level on all core and additional modules. Score increases on Key Train are likely to be greater than those on WorkKeys assessments for two reasons: 1) students on Key Train often need specific improvement in skill levels, while those taking WorkKeys represent all students—those at goal level and those below goal level and 2) participants often begin workplace literacy work on Key Train modules before taking WorkKeys assessments, so skills improvements in workplace literacy often take place while using Key Train.

Exhibit 38
Students' Workplace Literacy Progress as Measured by Key Train Scores
 Program Year Three (August 2003 to May 2004)

	<u>All Modules</u>	<u>Applied Math</u>	<u>Locating Information</u>	<u>Reading for Information</u>
Number of tests taken	1177	226	220	171
Average change in score	0.8	1.1	0.7	0.5
Percent with a positive change in score	40.2	56.7	39.1	30.4
Percent who met assessment goal	53.0*	35.4	52.3	55
Percent of those who met goal who scored Above their goal	33.1	18.8	35.7	36.2

Source: BPA calculations based on LCTCS Key Train data from 8 campuses (Bossier Parish Community College, LTC Baton Rouge, LTC Lafayette, LTC Northwest, LTC Shreveport-Bossier, LTC Folkes, LTC Avoyelles, and Sowela Technical Community College).

Note: All calculations are based on most recent Key Train test score. Also, some campuses did not pretest students on Key Train, so changes in levels for some students cannot be detected. Students took additional modules (included in the All Modules calculation) in the following subjects: Beginning Language, Beginning Math, Beginning Writing, Applied Technology Electricity, Applied Technology Fluid Dynamics, Listening, Applied Technology Mechanics, Observation, Teamwork, Applied Technology Thermodynamics, and Writing.

*Excludes Basic Language, Math and Writing Test Scores.

³⁷Not all students in workplace literacy participate in Key Train. For example, students who meet their WorkKeys goals immediately do not take part in Key Train.

³⁸ Unlike WorkKeys data analysis, Key Train results are calculated for all participants in the sample, not just those who have completed their work on Key Train or in workplace literacy. Therefore, student achievement levels should be seen as the lowermost limit on Key Train.

Usefulness of Workplace Literacy

Nearly all respondents to the All-Campus survey reported that workplace literacy was helpful. Respondents pointed to overall work-related skill building as well as increases in individual work-related areas, including computation, communication, reading comprehension, and teamwork (see Exhibit 39). However, when asked to rate the usefulness of TANF Initiative components in assisting participants in gaining employment, only 43 percent regarded Workplace Literacy as “very helpful.” By contrast, nearly twice this number listed technical skills attainment as “very helpful.”

Exhibit 39			
Usefulness of Workplace Literacy Component			
All-Campus Survey of TANF Initiative Programs, April 2004			
	<u>All Campuses</u>	<u>Community Colleges</u>	<u>Technical Colleges</u>
	<u>Percent (%)</u>	<u>Percent (%)</u>	<u>Percent (%)</u>
Workplace literacy is helpful in building:			
Skills in at least 3 core areas	97.6	100.0	97.1
Overall work-related skills	97.7	87.5	100.0
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>35</i>
Source: BPA All-Campus Survey of Workplace Basic Skills and Retention Services Program. Respondents were primarily TANF Campus Contacts, although some Workplace Literacy Instructors also completed surveys. Survey administered April and May 2004.			

A comparison of employment outcomes for those who received a Work Ready Certificate and those who did not reveal that the credential is associated with little short-term change in either employment rate or average earnings.³⁹ In general, Work Ready Certificate recipients have higher rates of employment and earnings than their workplace literacy counterparts both before and after program entry. Both groups experience increase in employment rate and earnings after program entry, but growth rates for both indicators are actually greater for recipients without a Work Ready Certificate, which is probably a function of the lower earnings and employment rates at which this cohort enters the workplace literacy component. We are only able to analyze employment outcomes for two quarters after program enrollment (additional data are not yet available), so it is possible that a more sizeable effect of this credential could be seen in the longer term. These outcomes corroborate survey respondents’ assertions that workplace literacy is helpful, but perhaps not the most critical element to leading employment for participants.

³⁹ Employment outcome analysis for workplace literacy exiters is done for participants that have at least two quarters of UI data post-program entry. Because workplace literacy data is for program year three only, restricting the data sample to those with four quarters of data is not possible.

The workplace literacy instruction and remediation appear helpful to a number of low literacy participants who have the greatest need of skills improvement. While it only leads to modestly higher earnings and employment rates, workplace literacy instruction appears to make a more significant contribution to improving participants' basic skills. As Exhibit 38 shows, more than half of the students who participated in Key Train achieved their assessment goal, and over a third of them exceeded it. This positive impact on basic literacy was also pointed out by interview respondents who concur that students value their overall literacy improvements gained from workplace literacy, especially given the work-related focus of WorkKeys. So while the employment effects of the workplace literacy component are less clear, its positive impact on basic literacy is more significant.

Recommendations Summary

- **Recommendation #1:** Programs should enforce the program requirement that participants take all of three core assessments and spend 45 hours in the workplace literacy component (unless meeting their goal levels scores). This will enable a higher proportion of students to establish their workplace literacy goals (p. 14)
- **Recommendation #2:** In addition to the OFC “top demand” classification, programs should use potential wages as a criterion for developing Upgrade programs, so as to ensure that participants enter occupations with strong advancement and earnings potential. (p. 22)
- **Recommendation #3:** Develop more advanced Upgrade programs that offer the potential for career advancement beyond entry-level positions. This would enable participants who begin at low earnings levels to advance to higher earnings level in a short time period. (p. 22)
- **Recommendation #4:** Programs should revise their web-based data collection processes to improve the accuracy of program data First, all default values should be set to missing so as to clearly identify complete and incomplete fields. Second, data on prior LCTCS enrollment, degree progress, and assessment scores should be added to the web-based system and collected from the general LCTCS campus database. Third, Field Coordinators and program staff should reconcile the web-based, WorkKeys, and monthly Monitoring Reports data to obtain an accurate program enrollment count. (p. 24)
- **Recommendation #5:** Encourage more participants to obtain a degree or certificate during or after their time in the program. While program participation alone appears to produce positive employment outcomes, degree or certificate receipt will significantly improve the labor market prospects of both Tuition and Upgrade students. (p. 38)

Conclusion

For the past three years the TANF Tuition and Upgrade programs have provided low-income parents with a unique and high-quality training program. Through a partnership between two of the state's workforce development and postsecondary education institutions, the Tuition and Upgrade programs have provided more than 15,000 low-income adults with postsecondary education, customized technical skills training, workplace literacy instruction, and a number of support services. In doing so, the program has succeeded in attracting many new students who had not previously received any postsecondary training, and in providing much needed financial and instructional support to many other students already enrolled in the state's Community and Technical College System.

The Tuition and Upgrade programs have been successful in enhancing both the educational and employment pathways of their participants. Many of these participants have benefited from the workplace literacy training and earned work-related credentials recognized by employers across the state. Some have advanced their education levels by completing technical training programs and earning post-secondary degrees and certificates. Most importantly, however, many participants have gone on to become employed in jobs that offer wages substantially higher than what they were earning prior to enrolling in the program. Overall, the TANF Tuition and Upgrades programs have provided an opportunity for advancement to many low-income people who might not otherwise have access to post-secondary education.

Unfortunately it appears that the TANF Tuition and Upgrade programs will not be renewed in SFY 2005, despite these programs' successes. This is particularly disappointing given that very few other training programs of this scope and caliber are available to low-income adults. Most of the other postsecondary financial aid programs have higher literacy requirements and stricter admission standards that many low-income adults find difficult to meet.

Thus a failure to renew these programs threatens to prevent many low-income people from accessing opportunities to improve their education levels and employment situations. Program results from the previous three years indicate that renewing Tuition and Upgrade programs through alternate funding sources will continue to produce benefits for low-income adults and their families and improve the overall readiness of Louisiana's workforce.

Appendix A

Methodology

The analyses and conclusions contained in this study are based on a variety of data sources. The following is a list of each of these data sources along with a brief description of how they were used:

- LCTCS administrative data – These data were collected from a sample of seven LCTCS institutions: three community colleges (Baton Rouge Community College, Bossier Parish Community College, and Delgado Community College) and four LTC campuses (Natchitoches campus, Lafayette campus, Florida Parishes campus, and West Jefferson campus). These campuses provided data on field of study, degree/certificate receipt, assessments scores, and terms of enrollment for a total of 3,313 students. These data were not designed to be a representative sample of the statewide student body but rather to provide us with some insight into Tuition and Upgrade students' entering literacy levels and educational attainment while in the program.
- LCTCS web-based data – This database was designed by the Workforce Commission and is maintained at each LCTCS site. Web-based data includes student demographics and utilization of program components. Contains records for 9,897 Tuition and Upgrade students. Data entry errors were known to occur when the system was implemented in Fall 2002, but efforts to correct these errors have improved the quality of this data source. These data were used primarily to calculate overall enrollment trends, and changes in student demographics.
- UI wage record data – The U.S. Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record data for Louisiana employees were used to evaluate participant employment outcomes. This study includes employment and wage records through the fourth quarter of 2003. In addition to using the UI data to analyze employment and earnings outcomes, these data were also used to determine students' pre and post-program industry of employment.
- All-Campus survey - Designed by BPA, this survey was piloted at four campuses in April 2004 and administered by mail to the remaining LCTCS campuses in April and May 2004. The survey addressed a number of program implementation issues across campuses. Forty-three of fifty campuses responded to the survey, yielding an 86 percent response rate. While TANF Campus Contacts completed most of the surveys, in some instances the surveys were completed by the Workplace Literacy Instructor or other TANF staff.

Appendix B

Program Overview and Design

Summary of Program Components

Tuition Program

Tuition assistance provides access for participating adults to enroll in standard courses at all LCTCS institutions. The purpose of the Tuition program is to assist adults who may have no other financial means to access educational and vocational training. Program participants take classes at no personal cost; TANF Initiative funds pay for LCTCS tuition costs and mandatory fees. Students also receive reimbursement for books and course supplies.

To participate in Tuition assistance, students must be enrolled in at least six community college course hours (or the technical college equivalent) and must meet the minimum literacy requirements set by each campus for particular courses of study. Students below this level may enroll in an unlimited number of developmental studies classes and sometimes in one or more technical skill areas. Tuition students take classes alongside general LCTCS students.

Upgrade Program

Upgrade training programs are customized short-term programs that are designed to provide participants with the skills needed to gain employment in high-demand occupations or advance in their current fields. Only TANF Initiative students may participate in Upgrade trainings since TANF funds pay for equipment used for instruction and cannot be used for non-eligible participants. Initially designed to target incumbent workers needing skills upgrades, by year three most Upgrade courses are serving as pre-employment training programs for participants who want to acquire a specific job skill. Upon completion of many Upgrade trainings, participants receive either portable credentials or an industry-based certification.

The LCTCS campuses offered 19 Upgrade programs across 12 different occupational areas during the 2003-2004 academic year. Fourteen different campuses sponsored these Upgrade programs across five different regions of the state. This year, all but one Upgrade training took place at technical college campuses, likely due to the technical skill focus of Upgrades and LTC campuses' experience in providing this type of training. The most commonly offered Upgrade programs were Certified Nursing

Assistant (6), Patient Care Technician (2), and Office Clerical (2). The other Upgrades were offered in a wide range of areas within the health, business, and education fields.

Responsibility for designing Upgrades resides with local campus staff. Campus TANF Initiative staff work with local employers to identify specific training needs in the workforce, and then develop programs that provide specific technical skills training interwoven with job readiness skills. Proposals for funding include named employer partners and describe contributions from employers (such as agreements to interview program completers); illustrate how the training meets regional goals and labor market needs; describe the instruction to be offered and hours of instruction; detail academic entrance requirements; identify certification available to participants upon program completion; and discuss post-training job placement strategies. Criteria for approval of Upgrade funding applications are 1) guaranteed job openings, 2) high wage earning potential at employment for participants, and 3) lower cost per participant of the training. Re-approval of year two programs adds previous year post-program employment rates to the preceding criteria.

Campuses propose Upgrade trainings to the program's Regional Planning Boards or to the State Management Team, depending on proposed cost per participant of the training.⁴⁰ Regional approval signifies that the team views the training as a worthwhile investment consistent with the workforce priorities in the region. Most of the organization and planning for campuses' TANF Initiative programs is done regionally to encourage schools to consider regional workforce and training needs, and to facilitate collaboration among campuses within regions. Regions convene Regional Planning Teams each month to strategize about the regional labor market needs and to coordinate and leverage resources from other local and regional agencies and organizations. Regional teams bring together TANF Campus Coordinators from each LCTCS institution, community-based organization members, and local branches of relevant government agencies.

Workplace Literacy Component

The workplace literacy component began in the Initiative's second year to address concerns that low-literate participants needed additional assistance improving their literacy skills to levels necessary for successful employment. Workplace literacy assistance consists of WorkKeys assessments, correlated computerized basic skills trainings, and group and individual instruction. The assessments measure participants' basic skills against those necessary for the occupations that they are pursuing, and identify additional training needs that participants may have. Nine WorkKeys assessments gauge discrete workplace skills: three core assessments in applied mathematics, locating information, and reading for information; and six additional assessments in applied technology, listening, observation, teamwork, business writing, and writing. Hundreds of profiled occupations list skill competencies that employees need to be successful in the profiled jobs. Completing WorkKeys assessments provides a

⁴⁰ Proposals with costs of less than \$1,500 per participant, or which total less than \$150,000 overall, can be approved by Regional Planning Boards; applications for funding that exceed either of these amounts must be approved by the State Management Team.

student with a standardized credential that demonstrates to employers that he/she has relevant skills for the desired occupation.

All Tuition and Upgrade program participants must take part in workplace literacy. WorkKeys assessments and correlated skills instruction on WorkKeys-related software are self-paced. Before taking the assessments, participants meet with campus Workplace Literacy Instructors to establish workplace literacy goals based on students' chosen career paths and employment goals. Instructors use the goal information and occupational profiles established by ACT to set students' target score levels on the assessments. Students scoring below these goal levels on the assessments complete coursework on Key Train and other correlated software, which focus on areas in which students have demonstrated difficulty when taking assessments. After completing remediation on the software, students re-take assessments. Students receive LCTCS transcripts listing WorkKeys tests taken and scores achieved upon completion of their workplace literacy requirements.

Employment/Education Action Plan (EEAP)

Each Tuition and Upgrade participant works with a program staff member on campus to develop an individualized Employment/Education Action Plan (EEAP), which sets occupational goals and outlines training steps to achieve those goals. The TANF Campus Coordinator, Workplace Literacy Instructor, or the coordinator of the Upgrade program typically completes the initial EEAP with students at intake. The staff member meets with students to discuss career and educational goals that guide students' program courses, services, and workplace literacy needs. Students also provide basic information such as employment and educational history, scores on entrance assessments, types of federal or state assistance students receive, employment status, and students' goals and interests. After devising a plan, staff and participants are expected to meet monthly to advise and follow-up on students' progress in meeting goals established in the EEAP.

Supportive Services

The Basic and Technical Skills Training Program offers several supports to complement Tuition and Upgrade services in order to address challenges that low-income parents may face at learning institutions. Participants can utilize childcare reimbursements, transportation stipends, and funds for textbooks and supplies. Tuition and Upgrade programs reimburse childcare expenses when children are cared for by state-approved childcare providers; reimbursement may be made for up to a maximum of \$15 per child for each day of the participant's training. Employed students can receive a transportation stipend of \$6 per day of training. Unemployed participants may utilize these childcare and transportation supports for 120 days only. All participants are reimbursed for needed supplies and textbooks up to a maximum of \$400 for full-time students and \$200 for part-time students.

Target Population and Recruitment Strategies

Respondents describe the Initiative's target participants as low-income parents in need of technical skills development and/or literacy trainings. In particular, the Initiative aims to serve participants who are not eligible for the Federal Pell Grant Program because they do not meet literacy or other eligibility criteria. Pell Grants are a common source of financial assistance for many LCTCS students, but low-income students not eligible for Pell typically have fewer opportunities to attend community college and technical college training. TANF Initiative funds are a critical source of funding for this group. Respondents note that TANF financial eligibility criteria along with program policy which allows for students to enroll in an unlimited number of developmental studies classes if necessary often attract participants with low literacy levels.⁴¹

In order to reach this target population, most campuses rely principally on word-of-mouth and voluntary enrollment to recruit participants for their TANF programs. The all-campus survey asked TANF Campus Coordinators to rate the extent to which they rely on various strategies to recruit new students for their programs in the third year (2003-2004). Respondents indicate that their chief source for enrollment is word-of-mouth due to the program's strong reputation. This is supported by reports from state-level officials who suggest that increased awareness in the community, combined with the maturation process of the program itself, has been the main source of enrollment.

Referrals and agency partnerships have also been responsible for some of the TANF program's enrollment in year three. Several state-level officials indicated that the clarification and refinement of previously existing partnerships with Support Enforcement Services (SES) and Drug Courts substantially increased the number of TANF referrals from those agencies. In most cases this meant that the Workforce Commission officials had to simply clarify what types of referrals TANF programs could take and who exactly was eligible for their services. Other officials indicated that collaborations with the Office of Family Support (OFS) have been on the rise in some localities.

Program Administration

The Workforce Commission TANF Coordinator in conjunction with the LCTCS TANF Coordinator oversee the Tuition and Upgrade programs. Both officials make programmatic and operational decisions. The Workforce Commission TANF Coordinator also monitors service provision and makes fiscal decisions. The LCTCS TANF Coordinator supervises TANF staff at LCTCS campuses and works with the four Field Coordinators, who provide regional technical assistance. The four Field Coordinators assist in coordination of campus Tuition, Upgrade, workplace literacy, and pre-release training programs (the last is a separate TANF Initiative) in two regions in the state. A TANF State Management Team, composed of Workforce Commission, LCTCS, DSS, Louisiana Economic Development, Department of Labor, and other officials, takes part in developing and managing

⁴¹ The Pell program which has strict limits on the amount of developmental studies classes that a student can take.

services. Additionally, a state Workplace Literacy Coordinator oversees workplace literacy programs at all LCTCS campuses. She provides technical assistance and monitoring regarding WorkKeys implementation.

Relationship to Other LCTCS Services and Training Options

The Basic and Technical Skills Training program is designed to supplement existing training resources available for low-income parents, leveraging the expertise of the LCTCS and its partners in providing work-related preparation. LCTCS institutions, and technical colleges in particular, have always sought to provide training responsive to industry needs. This mission closely fits with the TANF Initiative's goal of training participants for in-demand employment, and most institutions are experienced in sensing business and industry needs. Programs such as the incumbent worker programs at LCTCS campuses mirror services provided through the Upgrade trainings.

Coordination with other training programs, including One-Stop Career Centers, adult basic education programs, economic development programs, and services offered by faith- and community-based organizations, help LCTCS programs avoid duplication in services. TANF Initiative funds can be combined with other training resources, such as Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding and STEP (the work component of Louisiana's TANF cash assistance program), to fund particular training supports such as childcare for participants' children or fees for supplies that other training sources may not fund at as high of a level. TANF Initiative funding and other financial aid sources can be combined with other financial aid sources with the exception of Pell Grant funding at the LTC campuses.

The TANF Initiative program has led to innovations in service provision at LCTCS institutions. For example, some LTCs have diversified their vocational training options after seeing successful program completion and post-program employment of Upgrade students in training areas previously not offered at their campuses. Materials purchased for Upgrade trainings have also been used in later years in trainings for non-TANF students. Non-TANF LCTCS students, as well as WIA clients and other interested state residents, can now take WorkKeys assessments, having seen the benefits of this component in its first two years of implementation.