Chapter 4

ESL Program Models and Best Practices
Who Does It Best?

In the previous chapter, we showed how an integrated, contextualized ESL curriculum is the best route to take to meet the needs of skilled immigrants eager to successfully integrate into the workforce at a professional level. In this chapter, we will focus on four model programs which have built such contextualized curricula. These are best practice model programs that have been successfully replicated nationally with diverse populations.

They are (1) The Welcome Back Initiative begun in San Francisco, (2) The I-BEST model from the State of Washington, (3) The Massachusetts' Integrated Career Awareness (ICA) curriculum, and (4) the specialized curricula from the Spring Institute of Colorado.

It will come as no surprise that many of these model programs come out of the community college system. Community colleges have taken the lead in transitioning skilled immigrants into the workplace with innovative programs. They have been the major players in supporting academic and professional integration for immigrants at every level, by providing ESL and adult education, workforce training, certification programs, affordability and flexibility of schedules.

We encourage you to examine these four programs in depth to learn what works and what might be replicated at your institution. At the end of this chapter, we have listed other programs of note around the country.
1. The Welcome Back Initiative and the English Health Train Curriculum

The San Francisco Welcome Back Center is the lead site of the California statewide Welcome Back Initiative (www.welcomebackinitiative.org/wb/) established in 2001 to “build a bridge between the pool of internationally trained health workers living in the United States and the need for linguistically and culturally competent health services in under-served communities.”

Initially established as a joint project between San Francisco State University and City College of San Francisco, the California Welcome Back Initiative has developed a highly specialized, health-focused ESL curriculum called the English Health Train (EHT).

This innovative and comprehensive curriculum is an in-depth program designed to accelerate the employment readiness of non-native English speakers. Focusing on the language, communication, and career development skills needed to enter and succeed in health careers in the U.S., the curriculum is suitable for theme-based workshops, stand-alone lessons, quarter-long, or comprehensive year-long programs. It is targeted to help those who are planning to enter the healthcare sector, as well as those who are already working in healthcare positions and looking for advancement.

English Health Train consists of 320 hours of contextualized communication activities in five major themes, or modules, as well as strategies for career advancement, special projects.

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and assessment components (see Figure 1). The curriculum also includes 40 hours of web-based listening exercises. The modular approach is also applicable to Web-based distance education and stand-alone workshops. All units consist of activities that help develop language and communicative competence for everyday and challenging situations in healthcare environments with a special focus on cultural variables, health disparities and serving underserved communities (www.englishhealthtrain.org).

The Welcome Back Initiative has proved popular and effective and, consequently, has led to the opening of nine additional centers in San Diego, Boston, Rhode Island, Puget Sound, Northwest Washington State, New York City, suburban Maryland, Colorado and Alamo area Texas. We encourage you to learn more about the services offered by the Welcome Back Centers (www.welcomebackinitiative.org/wb/about/centers.html).

**Figure 1: English Health Train Offers Five Modules of Eight Units Each**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MODULE 1</strong></th>
<th><strong>MODULE 2</strong></th>
<th><strong>MODULE 3</strong></th>
<th><strong>MODULE 4</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UNIT 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNIT 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>UNIT 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>UNIT 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care Professions and Career Paths</td>
<td>The Patient–Health Professional Relationship</td>
<td>Interaction among Health Professionals</td>
<td>Understanding Health Care Systems</td>
<td>Culture and Communication in Health Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requirements for Entry in the Health Field</td>
<td>Gathering Patient Information</td>
<td>Using Medical Terminology Appropriately</td>
<td>Understanding Health Care Cultures and Sub-Cultures</td>
<td>Beliefs and Traditions about Health and Illness</td>
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<td>Job Search Skills</td>
<td>The Patient-Centered Interview</td>
<td>Assertive Communication with Co-Workers</td>
<td>Critical Health Issues in the U.S.</td>
<td>Cultural Diversity in Health Care</td>
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<td>Job Application Process</td>
<td>Examining and Monitoring Patients</td>
<td>Professional and Social Communication</td>
<td>Healthy Lifestyles and Behaviors</td>
<td>Serving Multicultural Patients</td>
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<td>Job Interview Skills</td>
<td>Developing a Treatment Plan</td>
<td>Working Effectively on a Team</td>
<td>Alternative Health Perspectives</td>
<td>Working with Multicultural Health Professionals</td>
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<td>Professional Behavior and Workplace Expectations</td>
<td>Medical Charting and Reporting</td>
<td>Supervising Health Professionals</td>
<td>Health Care for an Aging Population</td>
<td>Ethnic and Racial Disparities in Health Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work and Safety Issues for Health Professionals</td>
<td>Patients with Special Needs</td>
<td>Telephonic and Electronic Communication</td>
<td>Legal &amp; Ethical Issues in Health Care</td>
<td>Analyzing the Needs of Diverse Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development in Health Care</td>
<td>Handling Challenging Situations with Patients</td>
<td>Handling Challenging Situations with Co-Workers</td>
<td>Future Directions for Health and Health Professionals</td>
<td>Serving Underserved Communities</td>
</tr>
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2. I-BEST: Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training

Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) (sbctc.edu/college/e_integratedbasiceducationandskillstraining.aspx) began as a pilot program at 10 community and technical colleges in the state of Washington in 2006 and has since been implemented in all 34 colleges in the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) System. These colleges also provide higher levels of support and services to address the needs of non-traditional students. There are now more than 140 approved programs using the I-BEST model.

The I-BEST model challenges the traditional notion that one must first complete an ABE or ESL curriculum before moving to college-level or job-training course work. The I-BEST model pairs ESL or ABE instructors with content area instructors to co-teach college-level vocational courses and workforce training.
The I-BEST Model

- I-BEST programs must include college-level professional-technical credits that are required of all students in the selected program and are part of a career pathway.
- All students must qualify for federally supported levels of basic skills education.
- Students must be pre-tested using CASAS (the standardized test used statewide to assess ABE and ESL students).
- An instructor from basic skills and an instructor from the professional-technical program must jointly instruct in the same classroom with at least a 50 percent overlap of the instructional time.
- Faculty must develop integrated program outcomes, jointly plan curriculum, and jointly assess student learning and skill development.
- I-BEST programs must appear on the demand list for the local area and meet a minimum set wage.
3. Massachusetts’ Integrated Career Awareness (ICA) Curriculum

In conjunction with the National College Transition Network and SABES (System for Adult Basic Education Support) with authors from Northern Essex Community College, Massachusetts has created an Integrated Career Awareness curriculum (www.collegetransition.org/publications.icacurriculum.html), which can be used by both ABE and ESL populations. It is comprehensive and contextualized with very practical lessons and resources. This is a flexible curriculum that presents life skills in an effort to prepare adult learners for post-ESL careers and college. The handouts in this curriculum are some of the best ever produced.

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2 Oesch, Martha and Carol Bower. 2009. Curriculum Guide for Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE and ESOL Classroom. NCTN and SABES.
4. **The Spring Institute of Colorado**

The Spring Institute of Colorado offers a program model that could be used to train skilled immigrants; however, it is currently offered to visiting professionals from abroad. In partnership with the Denver International Program (DIP), The Spring Institute of Colorado ([www.spring-institute.org/?action=englishforinternationalprofessionals](http://www.spring-institute.org/?action=englishforinternationalprofessionals)) provides mid-career international professionals the opportunity to learn English and gain training and expertise in their careers. A typical Spring Institute course is 18 weeks in length divided into the following two parts:

1. **Six-Week Intensive English Program**: Spring Institute provides a six-week intensive (23 hours/week) English study course tailored to prepare participants for their training assignments. Part-time instruction for professional English also continues throughout the 12-week practical training.

2. **12-Week Training Program**: Training assignments, arranged through DIP, are generally 12 weeks in length in specific industries. Training opportunities have included, but are not limited to banking, petroleum, mining, accounting, government, micro-credit lending, academia and non-profits.
These programs have been found to be very effective in preparing participants for positions of higher responsibility, in developing leadership skills, increasing job possibilities, enhancing effective communication and improving overall quality of work.

Other Initiatives You Should Know About

The popularity in the use of specifically-designed contextualized curricula for ESL and job training programs is spreading across the country.

The Center for Employment Training (CET) model focuses on providing hands-on training for occupation-specific job skills integrated with English language learning. It uses a case management system that provides advocacy for the English Language Learner. ([www.cetweb.org/index.php](http://www.cetweb.org/index.php))

The National Center for Construction and Research (NCCER) is a NCCER also drives multiple initiatives to enhance career development and recruitment efforts for the industry. NCCER has begun development of ESL components designed to be integrated with their construction trade curricula. ([www.nccer.org/about](http://www.nccer.org/about))

Met Council offers contextualized ESL classes for foreign-trained nurses along with preparation and training for international nurses who want to take the NCLEX Nursing Exam. They also offer an electronic health records training program. ([www.metcouncil.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Programs_Career_Services_Nurses_FAQ](http://www.metcouncil.org/site/PageServer?pagename=Programs_Career_Services_Nurses_FAQ))

Project ACE (Accelerated Content-Based English) of Miami Dade College created a curriculum offering an accelerated parallel track in English for Academic Purposes. The program saves students time and money by reducing the number of ESL courses required before they enter the workforce or an academic program of study. ([www.sunywcc.edu/cccie/pdfs/practices/Miami_Dade_ACE_Accelerated_EAP_submission.pdf](http://www.sunywcc.edu/cccie/pdfs/practices/Miami_Dade_ACE_Accelerated_EAP_submission.pdf))

American Dream Team ESL for Employment Initiative of Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) enrolls intermediate level ESL students into 60-hour non-credit ESL for Employment courses. The course curriculum helps participants master the English language and cultural competencies needed for many entry-level, career track jobs, as well as in the job search process. ([www.sunywcc.edu/cccie/NOVA%20ESL%20for%20Employment.pdf](http://www.sunywcc.edu/cccie/NOVA%20ESL%20for%20Employment.pdf))

Upwardly Global and the Jewish Community Council of Coney Island’s Business English Program for Skilled Immigrants is a result of a strategic partnership between the two organizations that offers a Business ESL class for highly motivated, immigrant professionals, for whom English communication is a barrier to their employment. The class is conducted over a total of 150 hours and focuses on helping intermediate level English speakers develop advanced English skills in a business context. ([jccgci-vocational-services.blogspot.com/2010/11/unique-model-in-addressing-adult.html](http://jccgci-vocational-services.blogspot.com/2010/11/unique-model-in-addressing-adult.html))