

# Idea Board:

## Open Entry/Open Exit vs. Managed Enrollment



Although there may be some circumstances where offering an open-entry/open-exit class is necessary or even preferred over managed enrollment, in general, we recommend a managed enrollment system for an adult citizenship education program for the following reasons:

- There are clear start and end dates and a designated number of class hours; therefore, the program can create and maintain a well-developed curriculum to align with the semester, quarter, or session. (For example, a 12-week semester or a 14-week cycle)
- Managed enrollment is much easier for teachers and program administrators to “manage.” If a teacher is half way through the curriculum at week six, for example, and new students enter the class, the teacher has to divert time from the other students to help the new students catch up. Even under the best conditions where a volunteer is assigned to the classroom, this prevents the students who have been in the class for six weeks from maintaining continuous progress as they did. Despite efforts to help the new students catch up, they can still feel lost or out of place.

In 2006, the Massachusetts Department of Education funded a paper titled, “*Managed Enrollment: An Opportunity to Reinvigorate the Adult Basic Education Experience.*” The paper was written by Alisa Povenmire of the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Literacy. We recommend you read this paper for a much more detailed look at the benefits of a managed enrollment system. Povenmire states seven such benefits (4) below:

- increased sense of practitioner professionalism due to the increased ability to finish lesson plans and curriculum units
- increased time dedicated to curriculum planning and teacher sharing
- increased teaching and learning time
- increased ease and efficiency of administration of required assessments
- increased sense of community and cohesiveness among learner cohorts
- enhanced utilization and management of staff time
- improved student retention and learning gains
- improved job satisfaction

We realize that the main reasons many program administrators choose the open-enrollment/open-exit system over a managed enrollment system is due to the fear of losing potential students, or that students will suffer who need immediate help, or that their needed numbers

will shrink if students have to wait weeks until the following semester begins. Here are some tips for implementing a managed enrollment system, while at the same time providing your students and potential students with the high quality services they deserve.

1. Develop your curriculum for a semester, quarter, or session consisting of fewer weeks but more hours per week. For example, instead of a 15-week semester where students attend class 3 hours a week, have a 12-week semester where students attend class for 3.5 hours a week.
2. Start a transitions or “wait-list” class for students to come and study with a volunteer or volunteers (if your budget doesn’t allow the hiring of an additional teacher) until they can register for the following semester.

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**Recommended Reading:**

Povenmire, Alisa: Managed Enrollment: An Opportunity to Reinvigorate the Adult Basic Education Experience. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education, 2006

Scogins, Janet; Thompson, Jim; and Reabe, Linda: Illinois: Illinois Adult Education Enrollment Study conducted by The Center for Adult Learning Leadership, 2008