



ADULT LEARNER 360™

How Parallel Surveys Helped KC Scholars Stay on the Path to Adult Learner Success

KC Scholars is a 501(c)(3) organization working to increase postsecondary education attainment in the greater Kansas City metropolitan region. Its Adult Learner program covers adult residents in the Kansas City region with some college but no degree, and adults with associate degrees who want to earn a bachelor's degree.

The CAEL partnership began during the 2016–2017 academic year, as the KC Scholars program was launching. We conducted parallel surveys at five KC Scholar program institutions. One survey captured the perspective of institutional stakeholders who worked with adult learners or led those who did. The other captured the perspective of the institutions' adult learners themselves.

These assessments measured how adult learner-friendly the campuses were, enabling a bilateral gap analysis. The results identified existing areas of excellence, opportunities to improve adult learner support services across the region, and additional ways to champion subpopulations of adult students.

The survey results helped institutions better serve adult learners and prepared them for adult students who had been disconnected from higher education. Participating institutions received a report that quantified key challenges and charted how their strengths could be best leveraged in each area.

Many institutions' leaders found that their internal areas of concern did not always align with areas of need identified directly by adult students. Student feedback spurred efforts to make the improvements that mattered most to them, such as expediting the processes of FAFSA verification and credit transferring. These practices help adult students persist in their studies, and the collected data serves as a benchmark to measure the impact of change over time on adult students' success.

This approach underpins CAEL's Adult Learner 360 diagnostic tool and consulting solution, which continues to complement the excellent work that KC Scholars does for adult learners today. Thanks to the paradigm-challenging dynamics of parallel surveys, administrators can continually test their own perceptions against those of their students. In fact, for the 2019–2020 academic year, five additional campuses will take the assessment, and three of the original five will retake it.

Learn more at cael.org



CHALLENGE

KC Scholars wanted to complement the program's robust qualitative adult learner feedback with actionable data.

SOLUTION

CAEL's parallel institution and adult learner surveys, the foundation of its industry-transforming Adult Learner 360 solution

Since May 2017, KC Scholars has awarded more than 420 Adult Learner Scholarships. Just two academic years later, more than 30 recipients have completed their degree. Participation in the KC Scholars program impacts persistence as well; scholarship recipients progress from their first to second year of college at a rate (nearly 90 percent) 35 percentage points higher than the national average.

We understand what qualities make a difference for adult learners. AL 360 is backed by CAEL's breakthrough **Ten Principles for Effectively Serving Adults**, which were developed through decades of research and engagement.



74% OF STUDENTS ARE NON-TRADITIONAL



“With post-traditional students quickly becoming the new normal in enrollment across the nation, I would recommend the Adult Learner 360 approach for any campus committed to the success of adult learners.”

*Beth Tankersley-Bankhead, Ph.D.,
President and CEO of KC Scholars*

AL 360 helps you define your strategy for serving adult learners. By pinpointing areas of strength and opportunity, AL 360 facilitates planning that will have the most impact on their experience at your institution. Informed by student and institutional feedback, AL 360 helps you meet the needs critical to the success of both:

- Professional Development and Advancement
- Career Advising
- Strategic Partnerships, Mentorships and Internships
- Prior Learning Assessment
- Enrollment, Persistence, Completion



Recognizing that adult learners are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers, postsecondary educators, and employers, industry groups, foundations, and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, we foster a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals and their communities thrive. Established in 1974, CAEL, a Strada Education Network affiliate, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization.