

# OVAE CONNECTION



## Assistant Secretary Visits Innovative Center in Texas

Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier looked at Texas's [Birdville Center of Technology and Advanced Learning](#) on Oct. 21 to check out how innovation is finding its way into school programs across the nation. The school motto, "All students succeed in a future they create," captures the underlying philosophy of the school, which is to transition students to postsecondary and/or corporate environments successfully. From the physical environment, where classrooms appear more like conference rooms in order to create a more professional environment to an advanced curriculum that is targeted to the jobs of the 21st century, the school is organized to promote its goal, which is to prepare students for success in either transitioning to higher education or to fit into a corporate climate. Their career technology education embraces quality instructional partnerships with business and industry to successfully prepare students for the challenges of postsecondary education and a globally competitive workplace.

Birdville's curriculum offerings include: 21st century tools, arts and communications, business and marketing, health and medicine, science, engineering and technology, and social, personal, and public service. As part of an advanced media program, the school provides [podcasts](#) in the areas of forensic science, automotive technology, and culinary arts.

## New York Invests AEFLA Funds in "Literacy Zones"

New York state is investing nearly \$8 million annually in funds under the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)* to create 35 "[Literacy Zones](#)" statewide through 2013. Literacy Zones are a [reform initiative](#) developed by the State Board of Regents and the State Education Department. The geographic scope of a Literacy Zone is a neighborhood, zip code, school district, or community. Each one brings together a coalition of community stakeholders to focus on closing the achievement gap in urban and rural communities challenged by both concentrated poverty and high numbers of families and individuals with limited literacy or English language proficiency. The 18 Literacy Zones now operating have created family welcome centers that combine services and connect community members to benefits screening, case management, comprehensive services and referral, and pathways out of poverty. A sample of offerings includes:

- A continuum of literacy services from early childhood through adult, including strong support for parent involvement in their children's literacy development at home and their engagement with the school;
- Assistance and support for at-risk youths to enable them to complete high school and succeed in postsecondary education or advanced training;
- Postsecondary transitions that help out-of-school youths and adults earn a high school equivalency diploma and succeed in postsecondary education;
- Programs that help out-of-school youths and adults who are receiving public assistance or food stamps, or families with family incomes of less than 200% of the poverty line to obtain and retain employment;
- Transition services for persons returning to the community from incarceration;
- Pathways to citizenship and English language proficiency for limited-English proficient adults;
- Workforce development programs, including apprenticeship, career and technical education, and career pathways; and
- Support for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Agencies funded are expected to achieve, at a minimum, New York state's National Reporting System performance targets. Initial results show significantly higher educational gain and follow-up outcomes than for students not receiving Literacy Zone services. [More information](#) is available online and from [Bob Purga](#).