



Adult and Family Literacy in Pennsylvania Investing in Adult Education is Good for our Commonwealth

**Developed by the Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education
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Pennsylvania needs skilled workers to stay competitive.

Many Pennsylvanians need access to services that will get them skilled and ready to work.

Did you know that there are 1,243,039 adults living in Pennsylvania who do not have the basic academic skills needed to complete a job application? (1)

Adult and Family Literacy Education serves people who do not have the basic skills they need to secure and retain jobs that pay family sustaining wages.

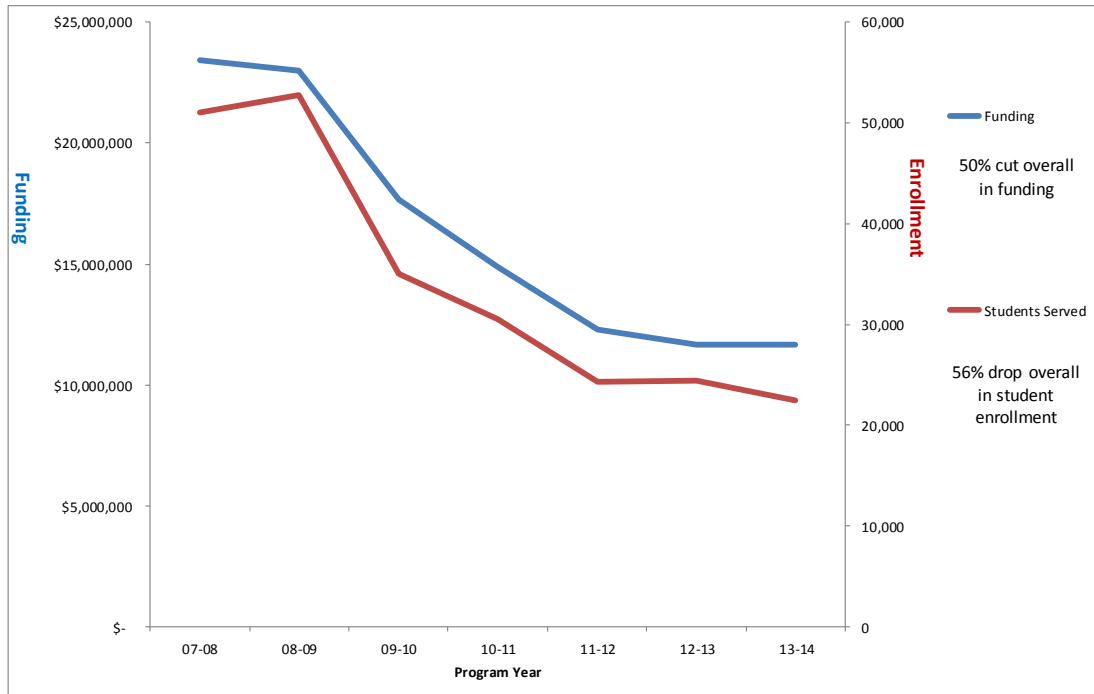
Data released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Survey of Adult Skills shows that one in six adults in the US has low literacy skills. One in three has low numeracy skills. One third of low skilled adults are under age 35 and one third are immigrants. (2)

The bad news is the number of low skilled adults has remained about the same during the last twenty years. Too many of Pennsylvania's adults are left out of adult basic skills education opportunities. One problem is the lack of resources to enable access to these opportunities.

This brief provides an overview of Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania and a rationale for supporting the proposed funding increase.

The graph below shows Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education since 2007:

Adult and Family Literacy Funding and Students



On March 3, 2015, Governor Tom Wolf proposed a 35% increase for Adult and Family Literacy Education – the new allocation proposed in the governor's budget is \$16,675,000.

Adult and Family Literacy education is the lifeline to good jobs. For low skilled adults in Pennsylvania, these programs provide the skills adults need to get and keep a good first job, access post-secondary education and job training, and get on a career path.

The US Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education commissioned Dr. Stephen Reder, professor in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University, to create five research briefs using that university's Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL) data to examine the long-term impacts of adult basic skills (ABS) program participation on a range of outcome measures.

Long-term Impact Data Highlights

- **Participants in ABS programs experience significant, and, in some cases, substantial increases in long-term educational and economic outcomes.**

The enhanced outcomes require **an average of 100 or more cumulative hours** of program attendance.

The enhanced outcomes do not typically appear until several years following program participation.

The income premiums to **ABS program participation average \$10,000 per year, in 2013 dollars.**

- The overall GED® attainment rate is estimated to have risen from 16 percent to 36 percent because of Adult Basic Skills program participation.
- **ABS programs appeared to be effective “on-ramps” into postsecondary education,** but additional supports are likely needed for completion.

Increased funding can result in adults ready for employment and post-secondary education; increases in their income and therefore taxes paid, state benefits not having to be paid; lower incarceration; better health.

The good news is that adult education in Pennsylvania is a good investment.

Educating Pennsylvanians Is Investing In Communities

Taxpayer Return on Investment for Adult and Family Literacy Programs Pennsylvania - 2013-2014

1. Unemployed students who got jobs:

3,985 adults gained unsubsidized employment X \$9.67/hour X 40 hours X 52 weeks = \$80,152,696 per year.

2. Increased Tax Revenue

\$80,152,696 annual earnings X 3.07% PA Tax Rate = \$2,460,687

3. Combined cost savings of each high school diploma or GED®

The combined cost for Pennsylvanians without a high school diploma or GED® of cash transfers and non-cash transfers cost taxpayers \$683 annually while a worker with a high school diploma or GED® enriches the state by \$6,067 annually through taxes despite transfer payments and other benefits. So, the benefits of moving someone up educationally to a GED® or diploma is \$6,067 + \$683 or a \$6,750 gain each year.

1,799 GED®'s obtained in 2013-2014 X \$6,750 = \$12,143,250

Credit for the cash transfers data: Paul Harrington and the Center for Labor Market Studies Data set for the median earnings: US Census Bureau 2007-2009 American Community Survey. PA Student Data for 2013-2014: US Department of Education Office of Technical, Adult and Continuing Education

Pennsylvania Data from the Budget Summary – Clarifications appear in red

In Fiscal year 2013-2014, Pennsylvania's state funds provide the share required for the state to receive federal Adult and Family Literacy funds from Title II of the Workforce Investment Act in the amount of \$17,517,689. The following data reflects a one-year snapshot.

In 2013-2014:

26,829 adults participated in programs
22,468 who were in the program more than 12 hours
12,364 were unemployed (46.1%)
8,894 were employed (33.5%)
5,481 were not in the labor force (20.4%)
8,558 were receiving public assistance (32%)
8,443 were living in rural areas (31%)

Effectiveness is measured by the number of adults who demonstrate educational gains on a standardized test, get jobs, retain jobs, pass the GED® Test or enroll in postsecondary education or job training.

In 2013-2014:

9,262 adults demonstrated an educational gain (36%) of the total number of participants.

While this may appear that 64% of adult learners drop out of the program, that is not the case. Education gain is measured using standardized tests in reading, math and language. 41% of students who had more than 12 hours made an educational gain. 67% of adults who had both a pre-test and a post-test made an educational gain.

Many students do not meet enrollment because they are not able to make the commitment to the program. Others may achieve 12 hours but have to stop out due to family and work demands. Still, others will not be ready to post test until the following program year.

1,977 adults remained at the same educational level (7%)

Many adult learners need to continue in the program – this data is a one-year snapshot.

15,226 adults separated before completing an educational level (57%)

Some adults achieve their goals early or have to leave because of family and work demands. Students who pass the GED® test may also appear in the number of students who did not improve their educational level because passing the GED® test does not count as a standardized test in measuring educational gain. Adult learners frequently stop out for family or work reasons and return later.

For example, Yvonne was studying for her GED® and had to stop out because her work schedule changed. Six months later, she returned to the program and completed her GED® the following year.

6,617 adults gained unsubsidized employment (54% of unemployed)

This number is captured through a state data match that occurs within a specified timeframe after exiting the program. There are many more adults who obtain employment past the date of the data match. Also, students who obtain employment in the public sector or in military service are not captured in the data match.

6,870 adults retained unsubsidized employment (76%)

This number is also captured through a state data match occurring within a specified timeframe after exiting the program and does not capture public or military employers.

2,039 adults passed the GED® Test

There were 13,249 adults who were enrolled in the program who started out with skills at the 8th grade level or below. There were 2,541 who were enrolled in the program with skills at the 9th grade level and above. The GED® Test is designed to demonstrate proficiency in 12th grade level skills. A new GED® test was implemented in January of 2014.

1,606 adults enrolled in postsecondary education or job training

This number reflected the number of adult learners who transitioned to a college or job training setting. There were only 2,541 adult learners who entered programs with academic skills at the 9th grade level or higher.

The data recorded in the budget book follow federal rules of data required and do not enable a full picture of service and outcomes-they represent a snapshot of one year. It does not provide data for learners who attend more than one year or outcomes several years later. Yet, the Long-Term Impact Data highlight that it takes an average of 100+ hours of cumulative program attendance, often requiring more than one year of attendance, and enhanced outcomes do not typically appear until several years following program participation.

As you can see, Adult and Family Literacy Education creates opportunities and transforms lives. It provides a second chance for hard working adults who want better lives for themselves and their families. It saves taxpayer money and improves communities. It reduces multigenerational poverty and illiteracy. For low skilled adults in Pennsylvania, it is the first step at a chance to access the middle class.

Sources

1. National Center for Educational Statistics
2. <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/StateEstimates.aspx>
3. US Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education – Making Skills Everyone’s Business
http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/ovae/2015/02/24/making-skills-everyones-business-report-launch/?utm_source=2015+March+12+Newsletter&utm_campaign=2015+March+13+Newsletter&utm_medium=email
4. US Department of Education Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education – Impact Data on Adult Ed Program Participation
<http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/ovae/2015/03/27/impact-data-on-adult-ed-program-participation/>

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