



Adult Education and Literacy Fact Sheet

What is Adult Education?

Adult education is an education program serving adults, 16 years of age and older (17 years of age in PA), who are functioning below the high school completion level with emphasis on **reading, numeracy, and English literacy**. Adult educators work with each adult student to design an individual learning plan that responds to the students needs and goals: e.g., to get a job; to help their children with homework and be successful in school; to get off of welfare and achieve a family sustaining income; to learn the English language, understand US culture, and participate in society; to complete high school or obtain a GED® credential; and/or to transfer to the community college or other training and education programs.

What is the Need for Adult Education?

There are two measures of need:

1. Of the 200,000,000 adults in America, 43,000,000 have not finished high school; eighteen percent of adults in Pennsylvania have not finished high school.
2. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, a study issued in December, 2005 by the National Center for Education Statistics (U. S. Department of Education):
 - approximately **30 million adults with serious educational deficiencies** which affect their ability to continue their education, benefit from occupational training programs, obtain and retain employment, or, in the case of limited English proficient individuals, succeed in their new home country.
 - an **additional 60 million have education deficiencies** that could also prevent them from fulfilling their potential.
 - thus, more than **90,000,000 adults (45% of the adult population)** are in jeopardy of not fully participating in family, work, and community opportunities.



Why is Adult Education So Important?

Because 45% of the adult population has basic skills deficiencies, adult education services are important to many sectors of society. As a result, adult education is important to:

- Business
 - American businesses **lose more than \$60 Billion** in productivity each year due to employees' basic skill deficiencies
 - New jobs require advanced skills. Over a thousand employers hold workplace adult education classes at their worksite to upgrade the basic skills and English literacy of their current employees.
 - **Public schools produce only 2% of the workforce annually.** The current work force and immigrants are the workforce. Employers need adult education to ensure that basic skills and English literacy match the jobs.
- No Child Left Behind
 - Children of parents who are unemployed and have not completed high school are five times more likely to drop out than children of employed parents.
 - Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mother.
- Public Health
 - 46% of American adults can not read and follow medical instructions.
 - AMA says **that individuals with low health literacy incur medical expenses that are up to four times greater than patients with adequate literacy skills**, costing the health care system *billions* of dollars every year for unnecessary doctor visits and hospital stays.
 - According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), adults who were ages 65 and older had lower average health literacy than adults in younger age groups. This has serious implications for the health and well-being of our nation's senior citizens.
 - The NAAL also found that Hispanic adults had lower average health literacy than adults in any other racial/ethnic group.
- Corrections
 - **Participation in correctional education reduces re-arrest, re-convictions, and re-incarceration.**



Why is Adult Education So Important? (continued)

- Adult Learners
 - **Young Adults**
 - Increasing numbers of 16-18 year olds leave school and come to adult education—their only alternative.
 - **Immigrants**
 - 46% of current adult education enrollees are non-natives seeking to improve English literacy and cultural understanding. Although limited English proficient adults constitute 15% of the eligible population, they make up 46% of students.
 - **Learning Disabled**
 - 50% of adults without a high school diploma are learning disabled
 - These adults were not lazy or uncaring about school. They have average or above intelligence, but the way schools taught and the way they learned did not match. They were truly left behind and deserve another chance.

(Source: National Council of State Directors of Education)

What is the Current Budget Situation?

- The 08/09 Federal appropriation (\$571,000,000) coupled with state and local funds (\$1.6 Billion) allow *only* 3% of the 90,000,000 to access classes and other services.
- In 08-09, Pennsylvania's program served 63,341 adults.
- Pennsylvania's allocation of the Federal appropriation was \$19,620,907.
- Family literacy is also supported by the federal Even Start program which provides \$2,487,370 funding for Pennsylvania's programs.

(Source: National Council of State Directors of Education and ABLE)

What is the Impact?

Adult education programs play a role in **the success of many national initiatives**, including job training, keeping our nation competitive, improving the academic achievement of our nation's children, providing alternatives for incarcerated individuals, improving the health of our nation's citizens, and helping individuals obtain the skills they require to obtain a job and end their dependency on federal programs. The **return on investment** in adult education is significant.

(Source: National Council of State Directors of Education)