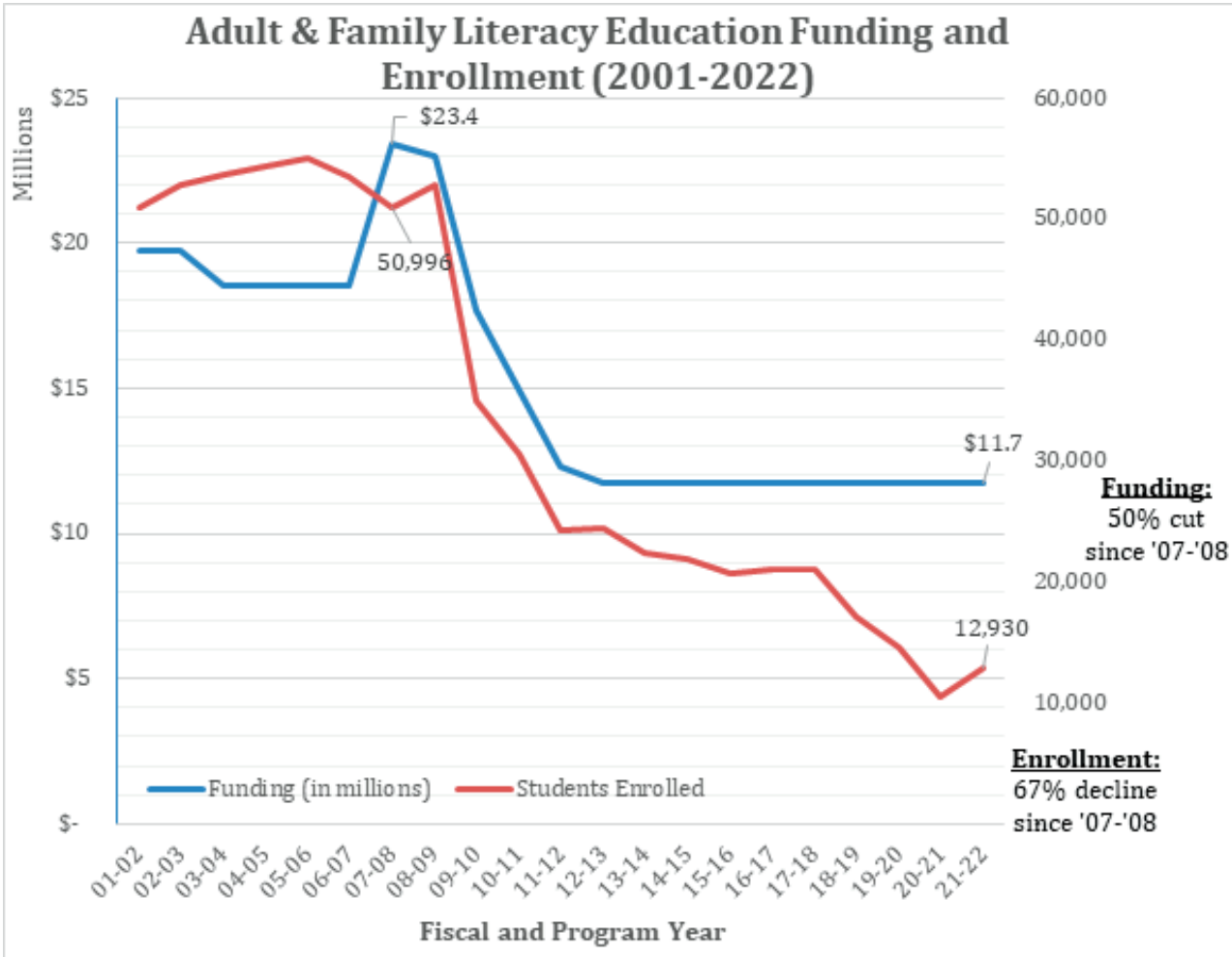


## ADULT AND FAMILY EDUCATION IS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Pennsylvania must increase investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education to accelerate workforce development to meet urgent employer needs. An infusion of an additional \$33.3 million will move more adults into middle skills work and help employers fill openings. By failing to increase funding, Pennsylvania is missing an opportunity to connect people to jobs.

- 2022-2023 Investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education = \$11.7 million
- The Adult and Family Literacy line item in the Pennsylvania Department of Education provides the required match for the Federal Title II funding of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA).
- This line item has been level funded since 2011.



## WHO WE ARE

PAACE (Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education) is a member organization of professionals in the field of adult basic and continuing education. Our more than 1,200 members work in community-based organizations, school districts, intermediate units and colleges to provide services throughout the Commonwealth. Our mission is to inspire adult education partners through advocacy, networking, and professional development so that adults succeed, and communities thrive.

## THE WORK

Adult and Family Literacy Education creates pipelines into jobs and job training by providing the educational support needed for under-skilled adults to succeed. Adult and Family Literacy Education programs provide ongoing career pathway support to working adults who need to continue to develop their skills to advance. Pennsylvania must join employers and higher education providers in valuing these critical services and invest in them so that no Pennsylvanian is left behind.

Adult and Family Literacy Education organizations provide a wide range of services designed around the needs of adult learners, including:

- College & Career Readiness (planning & preparation for careers in high-demand industries)
- Digital Literacy
- Adult Basic Education
  - + High School Equivalency Test Preparation
  - + English for Speakers of Other Languages
  - + Basic Academic Skills – Reading, Writing, Mathematics
- Family Literacy
- Health Literacy

## THE NEED

- 18% of Pennsylvania adults have literacy skills at or below the level needed for work, family, and community life. \*
- 646,612 working adults between 18 and 64 do not have a high school credential. \*
- 396,637 have less than a 9th grade education.
- 387,549 do not speak English well or at all.
- Yet, the state only funds seats for 14,364 adults in Title II programs.
- In the last five years, more than 64,000 students dropped out of high school. We expect that COVID-19 has exacerbated this “Academic Pandemic Drop-out Rate” and those students will require our functional literacy services to gain and sustain living-wage employment.

\* Source: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>

## OUR IMPACT

We serve working age adults with significant skills gaps who are typically under-employed and raising families. Participation is at their own pace and often includes breaks of months or years as they balance educational needs with life's demands. These factors influence the field's reported outcomes (see endnote for detail). The majority (66%) of students who continuously attend for at least 60 hours make educational gains equivalent to two K-12 school years – a remarkable accomplishment for them and a significant return on investment for Pennsylvania at an estimated cost of \$2,000 per student.

Adult education programs are not just a second chance at a basic education; for many adults in Pennsylvania, these programs are *the last chance*. Our programs connect the untapped labor force of under-skilled adults to employers in need of workers.

**On behalf of the more than 1.4 million Pennsylvanians who require adult basic education to earn middle skills jobs, PAACE urges Governor Shapiro and his team to make these vital investments:**

1

Increase the Adult and Family Literacy line item to \$30 million. As described above, the current level of investment does not align with the need and the value of these programs. This investment will enable 9,000 adults to become work ready.

2

Create a \$15 million Adult and Workforce Investment competitive grant fund that enables programs to innovate and quickly meet area employer needs. Adult and Family Literacy Education providers will use these flexible funds to improve access to technology, provide stand-alone digital literacy skills, expand student advising and career navigation, and strengthen employer partnerships that open job advancement pathways. Such investments are difficult or impossible within WIOA Title II limits.

3

Update the name of the line item in the Pennsylvania Department of Education Budget to “Adult Basic and Career Education” to more accurately describe the programming funded. The line item in the Pennsylvania Department of Education Budget is currently Adult and Family Literacy Education.

4

Commission a policy and regulatory analysis of states with high performing Title II programs to inform how Pennsylvania’s policy and regulatory environment can support strong outcomes.

## END NOTE

In fiscal year 2018/19, programs welcomed 20,916 adult learners. This number includes anyone who completed an intake and received an initial assessment. Of that 20,916 adults, 3,761 (18%) attended for less than 12 hours of instruction. These adults came to explore the program to find out if it was a good fit and a good time in their lives to take on adult education. Most adults who separate early quickly determine that they are not ready to take on the level of commitment required to benefit from the program. They work with student advisors who help them decide and ensure that the door is open to come back when they are ready.

Of the remaining 17,155 adults who were placed in an instructional program, 6,606 (38%) stopped attending classes before they had enough hours to be given a follow up assessment to determine learning gains (40 – 60 hours). Many of these students had to drop out because of shift changes at work, overtime, a new job, moving, family obligations, illness and issues with transportation and childcare. Federal reporting guidelines require PDE to report outcomes for everyone with 12 or more hours of service. Valid reasons for dropping out are not considered.

- **In summary, 44% of the total number of adults who walked in our doors in FY2018–19 had a documentable learning gain.**
- **54% of the total number of adults with 12 or more hours had a documentable learning gain.**
- **66% of adults who were pre and post tested had a documentable learning gain.**

**It is important to note that our students demonstrate learning gains equivalent to 1–2 years of K–12 schooling within 50–60 hours of instruction with an approximate annual cost of \$1,450 per learner.**

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