

Adult Education has a rich 150-year history in our region, but until now has still been considered the “best-kept secret.”



PATHWAYS FOR EVERYONE

Learn how these low- and no-cost programs are life-changing for individual Californians and their families, but may also be the economic engine for the entire state.



**Los Angeles
Regional
California Adult
Education
Programs**



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROCKY BETTAR

THE LONG HISTORY—AND IMPORTANT FUTURE—OF ADULT EDUCATION

How programs that have quietly been helping Californians since 1856 may be the answer to recovering from 2020

BY THEA MARIE ROOD

It's hard to believe adult education has been around for more than a century, but so many people don't fully understand what it is, what it does or what impact it could have on our state as a whole.

"With the pandemic, so many businesses have closed," says Rocky Bettar, the director of adult education/career preparation for the Rowland Unified School District. "Especially small business—the mom-and-pops—have been hit hardest. Adult ed can be that vehicle for those looking to get a different job or to improve their career."

Currently, there are more than 425 adult schools and community college noncredit programs in California, serving close to 1 million adult learners. "Adult education has been there for 150 years," Bettar says, because of its ability "to pivot immediately based on what the community needs. Each district is totally different and is able to provide what's necessary, to provide help to those who need it."

Generally, the natural constituency of adult education are students who have barriers—barriers that must be dealt with in a sensitive and respectful way. "Our students are not familiar with the education system, not familiar with how to navigate it, not even understanding it's there for them," he says. "We have a huge ESL population of adult learners. And in our K-12 system too. Our goal is to be a bridge for those adults so they can help their children."

In fact, research—and heartwarming anecdotal evidence—shows adults who are seen studying and completing academic

"We accept all adults through the door—there is no resident requirement, no questions asked. We are the safety net."

Rocky Bettar
Director, Adult Education/Career Preparation, Rowland Unified School District

milestones have a significant impact on their families. Bettar, for example, tells the story of an 82-year-old retired grandfather who attended the Rowland Unified GED program to finally earn his high school diploma. "His whole goal was to be a role model to his grandchildren and show them education is important," Bettar says.

Bettar says his district—and all adult education systems—are constantly redefining what people need to keep their programs relevant. That means paying attention to each individual learner's needs. "We accept all adults through the door—there is no resident requirement, no questions asked," he says. "We are the safety net."

To learn more about the history of adult education in California, visit caadulthoodhistory.org. To learn more about the Rowland Unified School District's adult education program, visit <http://race.rowland.k12.ca.us/> or call 626-965-5975.



WHY WE NEED ADULT EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

Number of people who aren't high school graduates:

4,702,104

*Number who aren't employed:

1,557,681

Number who are in poverty:

2,624,531

Number who are illiterate:

2,976,145

Number who need to learn English:

3,473,458

Number who have a 7th grade education:

2,030,579

* The impact of COVID-19 has pushed this 2010 figure to 2.172 million.

From the 2010 U.S. Census

START HERE!



Step 1: Decision to pursue your education

Student gets motivated due to having an immediate need (i.e. need to put food on the table, get a better job, learn English, go back and get their diploma, etc.) and/or is referred by another local/regional program.

Step 2: Find a local adult education provider / no wrong door

Reasons why adult students pick their school:

- Based on word of mouth
- Saw an advertisement/saw it via social media
- School was close by
- Their kids went there
- No cost
- Was a referral from another program
- Track record of quick student acceleration towards goal
- Flexible schedule



Step 3: Create your plan, develop your goals

Student is assessed, goals are discussed, student talks to a counselor, education plan is created, a personalized pathway to goals is created, or student is referred to another adult education provider in the region based on their plan (and who can meet their needs).



Step 6: Transition to reach your goal

- Transition from English Second Language or Adult Basic Ed to Adult Secondary Education
- Transition from ESL/ABE/ASE to Career Technical Education



Step 5: Make progress

- Achieve student progress (measurable skills gains)
- Awarded a short term certificate, diploma, or high school equivalency
- Complete a workforce preparation milestone
- Complete training to help individuals better access their community

Step 4: Pick a program(s), follow your path

Possible course offerings:

- High School Diploma/High School Equivalency
- Adult Basic Education/Literacy
- English Second Language/Civics/Immigrant Integration/Citizenship
- K-12 Success (adults helping elementary & secondary students succeed)
- Adults with Disabilities (living skills, learning skills for adults)
- Career Technical Education – Short Term Vocational, Workforce Preparation, and
- Pre-apprenticeship



Step 7: SUCCESS!

- Living Wage / In Demand Jobs
- Transition to Post Secondary credit coursework for AA degree, Certificate

ADULT EDUCATION STUDENT JOURNEY

Network of Adult Education Providers:

- K-12 adult school programs
- County Office of Education programs
- Regional Occupational programs
- Jail Education programs
- Community College noncredit programs

Network of Adult Education Partners:

- Workforce Boards and One Stops
- Employers
- County Social Services
- Library literacy programs
- Community-based organizations
- Nonprofits
- Faith-based organizations

CHANGING LIVES — HERS AND OTHERS

After learning English, this graduate gives back to school and new students

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

Greater Los Angeles is one of the most diverse regions in the U.S., largely populated by non-English speakers who often find the challenge of a foreign language an obstacle to education, employment and the overall goal of improving their lives.

As so many have found, free or low-cost adult education can be the pathway to personal fulfillment and a more secure future. Viridiana Preciado of Bloomington discovered that first hand after she and her father emigrated from Mexico six years ago.

Though she spoke no English, “I wanted to continue my education,” says Preciado, now 25. “A neighbor, who was a preschool teacher, recommended Fontana Adult School. As soon as I walked into the front office, they answered every question I had.”

Within two weeks of arriving in California, she was enrolled in the school’s English as a Second Language program (ESL). A year and a half later, she had earned both her ESL and high school equivalency certificates.

“I really love that school, it opened a lot of doors for me,” she says. “They really want to give their students the tools to transition to not only learning English and getting their GED, but to college and getting citizenship.”

Preciado continued her education at a local junior college, earning an



Viridiana Preciado learned more than English after enrolling at Fontana Adult School. She started a career of service to others.
PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRIDIANA PRECIADO

associate’s degree in sociology and universal studies. Last spring, she was accepted at CSU San Bernardino.

“I’m taking the social work program,” she says. “I really like working with and helping people, especially adult education students.”

“Adult education is really like paying it forward to society,” says Fontana Adult School assistant principal Ruzanna Hernandez. “As soon as Viridiana becomes a social worker, she’s going to contribute to society not just by working and making wages, but by the fact that she’s going to help people.”

Meanwhile, Preciado works a full-time job at a community clinic, helping patients with paperwork and appointments.

She has volunteered her time at Fontana Adult School, going from classroom to classroom, telling ESL

“Adult education is really like paying it forward to society.”

Ruzanna Hernandez
Assistant principal,
Fontana Adult School

students her story and encouraging them to stay with the program.

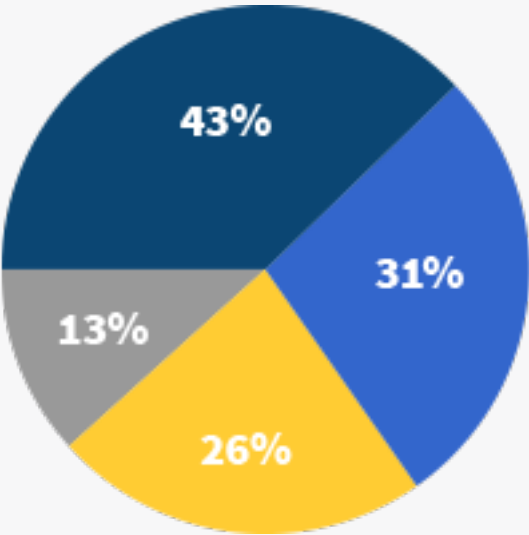
“They have a lot of responsibilities outside of school (such as) work and families, so sometimes they put their education as not a priority,” she says. “We understand that, so we try to motivate them.”

“I tell them that the school helped me achieve my goals, and that if they work hard, it’s going to be worth it in the end.”

To learn more about Fontana Adult School, visit www.fusd.net.

LANGUAGE ABILITY

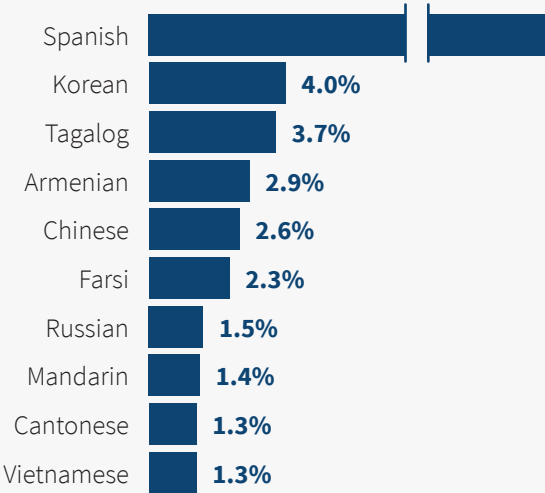
LOS ANGELES ADULT EDUCATION ENROLLMENT BREAKDOWN



- 43% English Second Languages
- 31% Career Technical Education
- 26% Adult Secondary Education
- 13% Adult Basic Education

From the Chancellor’s Office Adult Education Pipeline on LaunchBoard

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME IN LOS ANGELES AREA



California Adult Education 2019 Fact Sheets

Ipolita Yecenia Cifuentes de Leon became an award-winning hair stylist and barber, thanks to adult education.

PHOTO COURTESY OF IPOLITA YENCIA CIFUENTES DE LEON

FINDING A PATH TO A DREAM

Adult school let her learn English, earn a diploma and launch a career

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

One of the many benefits of adult education is it offers a variety of programs in hands-on career and technical education (CTE), ranging from automotive repair to logistics.

CTE was the path taken by Ipolita Yecenia Cifuentes de Leon of Los Angeles. She arrived from Mexico at age 15 with a second-grade education and no English skills. She went on to complete an English as a Second Language course and graduate from high school.

“My dream was always to study hair-styling at cosmetology school,” says de Leon, now 34.

She applied to several colleges, but tuition was out of her reach. “I gave up on my dream and instead worked three jobs to save enough money to study something else, but I didn’t know what.”

“It made me believe in myself, and now I know that anything can happen.”

Ipolita Yecenia Cifuentes de Leon
Abram Friedman Occupational Center graduate

Then a chance meeting with a woman at a bus stop became a pivot point. “I told her that her hair was beautiful and she said she’d had it done at her school, the Abram Friedman Occupational Center.”

De Leon inquired at the school and was told she could start its cosmetology program the next day. Two months in, she entered a state cosmetology competition and won the silver medal.

“I saw I had potential and pushed myself,” she recalls. Six months later, she took the gold at her second competition.

Later, the Friedman Center sponsored her to represent California in a national cosmetology competition, where she placed fourth after a technicality knocked her out of first place.

De Leon took on the role of mentor to other Friedman Center cosmetology students, telling them, “Even though there are sacrifices, you’ll end up with something that speaks for you.”

De Leon even appeared at the State Capitol as an advocate for adult education. “I told them, ‘No one guided me to affordable adult

education after high school. I didn’t have a clue, and neither do so many others who need the opportunity.”

After she earned her cosmetology license, she “jumped to the school’s barber program for a year, finishing in 2018. I have a double license,” she says. “To be a female barber in L.A. is a big deal.”

Now she rents a chair in a salon that she plans to buy. “I was about to sign the papers when the pandemic happened, but the owner is holding it for me.”

She credits the Friedman Center for “completely changing my life. It made me believe in myself, and now I know that anything can happen.”

For more information on Abram Friedman Occupational Center, visit abramfriedmanoc.org.



ADULT EDUCATION ENROLLMENT AND LEVEL GAINS

LOS ANGELES REGION			
Data Points	16-17	17-18	18-19
Enrollment	260,803	280,282	263,749
Level Gains	35%	40%	41%

INLAND EMPIRE REGION			
Data Points	16-17	17-18	18-19
Enrollment	64,015	72,408	69,079
Level Gains	29%	41%	45%

The Chancellor's Office Adult Education Pipeline on Launchboard /Studies find that increasing English proficiency by one level raises earnings by over 30%, Immigrant Integration in the United States: The Role of Adult English Language Training, Harvard University, November 2020.

‘THEY GAVE ME THE POWER TO HAVE MY DREAMS’

Fontana Adult School programs help student become a citizen and rebuild his career

BY ANNE STOKES

Joao Paulo Democko immigrated to the United States to escape violence and war. He stayed for love.

“I’ve traveled around the world to different countries. When I (came to) the USA, I felt freedom,” he says. “When I came here, I found love. ... I’m now married, we have wonderful kids and I’m staying here for those reasons.”

In 2015, Democko emigrated from Columbia, where he was an emergency room doctor. When he first arrived, he found work in restaurants and as a manager, but he wanted to return to the medical field to serve his new community.

To do that, however, he needed to improve his English skills. He enrolled in Fontana Adult School’s English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to become more fluent as well as to prepare for citizenship. While there, he learned about the school’s medical assistant program.

“My first contact with the school was for English class. And then when I was there, I was open to (enrolling in) another program,” he says. “I’m (studying) medical assisting because it’s a way for me to start to do more for others and to look for better opportunities for me here.”

Not only was he impressed by the quality of instruction he received, Democko says he was also impressed by the support he got from teachers and staff.

“The school not only supports you in looking for jobs for you, they do more: They (care) how you feel during the class, they support you when they give a high-quality (education), everything helps,” he says. “You feel like somebody cares about you all the time.”

Democko recently transferred to Chaffey College, where he hopes to graduate from its medical assisting program in February 2021. He’s also on track to complete his ESL coursework and citizenship requirements by the end of next year. Ultimately, he says he’d like to become a registered nurse, a career path he says has been made possible by the skills he’s learned at Fontana Adult School.

“In adult school, they give you the power to do anything you want no matter the situation ... They gave me the power to have my dreams,” he says. “I always have hope because it’s never too late. When you go to the adult school, you feel like it’s never too late for your dreams.”

For more information on the classes and services Fontana Adult School offers, visit www.fusd.net/adultschool or call 909-357-5490.

“When you go to the adult school, you feel like it’s never too late for your dreams.”

Joao Paulo Democko
Fontana Adult School student



After traveling the world, Joao Paulo Democko found freedom and love in the U.S., but needed language skills to succeed.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOAO PAULO DEMOCKO

INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK

When students learn English, become a citizen or complete academic milestones, they become more involved in all aspects of their community.



Participation in Civic & Community Life



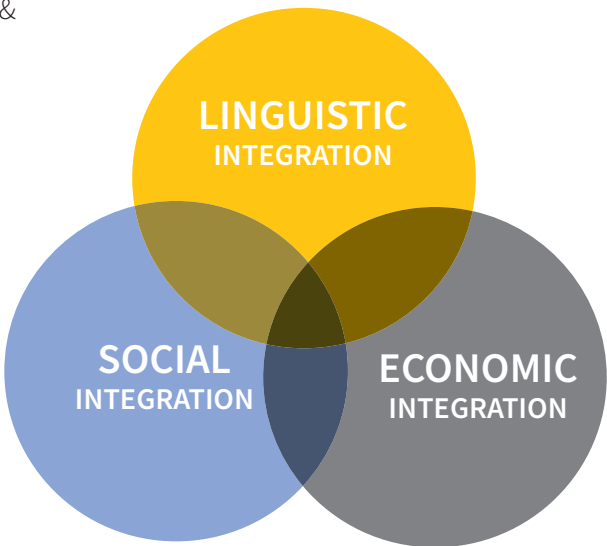
English Proficiency



First Language Literacy



Credentials & Residency



Education & Career Advancement



Health & Well-Being



Economic Security



Providing For Children & Family

Marcos Gordian got the language help he needed to further his film and TV career.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARCOS GORDIAN

REMOVING BARRIERS, THANKS TO EDUCATION

His film career got rolling after he went to adult school

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

Film producer-photographer Marcos Gordian's professional life changed after he went to Burbank Adult School. "I was trying to develop a lot of projects, but it was difficult because of the language barrier," says Gordian, 34, of North Hollywood.

Gordian studied English as a Second Language, an 18-month course. After graduating, "I started working a lot more," he says. "The school was great, and the teachers were patient and there to help, even after hours. I am very grateful."

Gordian has a degree in social communication from a university in Mexico City and graduated from an intensive filmmaking program.

"I was doing well in Mexico with documentaries and short films, but I wanted to see how the film business runs here and expand my career," he says. So he emigrated in 2016.

After living in Phoenix, Arizona (for family reasons), Gordian moved his wife and children to Los Angeles, "where there's a lot more film production." After acquiring his ESL certificate, he shaped a career that combines part-time jobs with freelance work.

Among his jobs, Gordian serves as a production assistant on sets where movies and TV commercials are filmed.

"As a production assistant, I put the feet and head on a project, overseeing the logistics and developing scene schedules," he explains. Part of that involves "picking up all the gear for the productions and delivering it to the sets."

Gordian has helped produce TV commercials for clients such as Nike, Home Depot, McDonald's, Domino's and the software company



"I know I still have a lot to learn, but I know I'm on the correct path."

Marcos Gordian
Filmmaker and Burbank Adult School graduate

Square. He also has worked on the sets of Spanish-language movies that have aired on Netflix and HBOMax, and many that have been screened at film festivals.

Until the pandemic, he taught filmmaking at Creating Creators in Los Angeles, which teams with school districts to develop students' creative skills.

"On my own, I do still photography — landscapes, families, products — and brochures and institutional and business videos for (a range) of companies (including) law firms," he says.

Thanks to the help he received via adult education, Gordian enjoys his varied career. "I know I still have a lot to learn," he says, "but I know I'm on the correct path."

For information on Burbank Adult School, visit www.burbankusd.org/bas or call 818-729-5950.

LOGISTICS: CAREER ON THE MOVE



Among the many career offerings for study at **adult education schools is logistics, a profession that continues to aggressively hire as national and global trade expand.** It was included in U.S. News & World Report's "2020 Best Business Jobs."

Simply put, logistics — also known as supply chain management — involves the detailed planning for and oversight of the flow of goods and services between their sources and their final destinations. Quality control and warehousing are parts of it. Teamwork and communication are essential.

An example is the artichoke crop in Monterey County, which provides almost all of that vegetable nationally. Logistics would require making a plan to safely and effectively move tons of artichokes from California to, say, New York, where they would be stored and distributed.

Depending on which of a half-dozen specialties you choose within the logistics field —logistician, for instance, or procurement specialist — annual salaries can range from \$43,000 to \$120,000.

Araseli Bucher completed the courses she needed while staying at home to school her child during the COVID-19 lockdown.
PHOTO COURTESY OF TORRANCE ADULT SCHOOL



FLEXIBILITY TO LEARN AND EARN

Veteran got the career training she needed while under lockdown

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

Adult education programs offer something extra to time-strapped students: Flexibility. Courses fit into the busy lives of people juggling many responsibilities outside the classroom.

And during COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, that flexibility became even more important.

Araseli Bucher appreciates that flexibility. An Air Force

"In approximately 11 weeks, I received six certificates, two of which were certifications."

Araseli Bucher
Torrance Adult School certificate program graduate

veteran and mother, she lost her job and needed to broaden her skills.

"I recently became unemployed after working for a small laboratory for 11 years as a Purchasing and Facility Manager," Bucher says. "I received a catalog for Torrance Adult School in the mail. I looked through it mainly because I needed more flexibility in the class schedule than a community college could provide."

With the goal of earning a Business and Finance Program Certificate, Bucher picked out classes in Accounting, Excel and QuickBooks Online. Then, Los Angeles County's stay-at-home order went into effect.

"With my husband as an essential worker, I found myself homeschooling our 8-year-old," Bucher recalls. "I thought the classes I enrolled in would be canceled."

Instead, Bucher could keep working on her certificate while keeping her family and herself safe.

"Torrance Adult School immediately adapted and offered all the classes online," she says. "I considered withdrawing because I did not want to take a self-paced online course. My instructors made themselves available via email, and virtual classroom meetings where they lectured and presented all the coursework needed to prepare me for the upcoming certification exams."

Bucher not only completed her original coursework, she accomplished a lot more.

"In approximately 11 weeks, I received six certificates, two of which were certifications (as a Microsoft Office Specialist in Excel and as an Intuit QuickBooks Online Certified User)," Bucher says.

Torrance Adult School also gave her the resources to find a new job including resume writing, interview workshops and virtual job fairs.

"Within 10 days of completing the Business and Finance Program, I began working as a freelance bookkeeper," she says. "My client was impressed by the quality of work I provided and has begun to recommend me to other colleagues."

"I highly recommend Torrance Adult School to anyone that would like to have additional skills to further their career," she adds, "or anyone who is undecided about attending college or is not sure what career field they want to pursue."

To learn more about Torrance Adult School, visit www.tastusd.org.

HEALTH CARE CAREER GROWTH

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care field is projected to grow 15% in the next decade and add 2.4 million new jobs—more than any other occupational group. Some of the top fastest growing health care occupations include:



Nursing assistant

- 2017: 103,345
- 2027: 131,054 (27% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$22.39
- Median annual wages: \$46,578



Home health aide

- 2017: 31,461
- 2027: 37,329 (19% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$14.99
- Median annual wages: \$31,175



Physical therapist assistant

- 2017: 5,114
- 2027: 7,710 (51% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$38.49
- Median annual wages: \$80,063



Occupational therapy assistant

- 2017: 1,955
- 2027: 3,209 (64% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$40.30
- Median annual wages: \$83,832



Health technologists and technicians

- 2017: 24,221
- 2027: 33,231 (37% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$37.56
- Median annual wages: \$78,130

A WIN-WIN SITUATION

Adult education programs benefit employers and employees

BY ANNE STOKES

No business can succeed without good employees. Whether a company needs workers with a specific skill set, general soft skills or a mix of both, adult education programs prepare students not only for their own success, but their employer's too.

The Verdugo Workforce Development Board works with businesses, economic development agencies and educational partners to connect employers and qualified job seekers. According to board executive director Judith Velasco, adult education programs enable students to meet labor market needs through varied course offerings, affordable tuition and easy admission criteria.

"Our partnership with adult education over the last decade or more has really showed us that their services are really robust," she says. "If we identify a need ... they're very open and flexible in hearing those needs and being prompt and very flexible in making it happen."

FLEXIBILITY

Adult education benefits both employers and employees. Programs can react timely to emerging industry needs through new courses and opportunities to upgrade existing employees' skills. For job seekers, adult education can offer new career pathways or a specific skill they may need, such as computer software certification.

A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION

While some positions require specific qualifications — known as hard skills — all jobs require soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem solving and adaptability. According to Velasco, many technical schools don't teach soft skills, but adult education programs do.

"Employers are always telling us, 'We can teach the hard skills, we want someone with the soft skills,'" she says. "Or



"They really try to do a robust training curriculum that can appeal to a wide audience."

Judith Velasco
Executive director, Verdugo Workforce Development Board

they say, 'We will train them, but we want someone with a good attitude, who will come to work on time and with a smile.'"

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Due to the pandemic, many people are out of work and trying to figure out what to do next. Adult education can help job seekers rework their skill set or learn the basics of starting their own business.

"I think that our adult education system has done a good job in reaching out to industry experts or people who have been very successful in starting a business to get ... those expert instructors in place to provide that type of training," Velasco says.

While many students enroll in adult education programs for English as a Second Language or help earning their high school degree, Velasco says adult schools offer so much more.

"Once you start looking at their course offerings, you'll be pleasantly surprised that there is a class for everybody," she says. "They really try to do a robust training curriculum that can appeal to a wide audience."

For more information about how the Verdugo Workforce Development Board can help you, visit www.verdugoworkforce.com or call 818-409-0476.

IN-DEMAND JOBS AND INDUSTRIES

While the COVID-19 has taken its toll on many businesses and industries, some jobs skills are still in demand.



HEALTH CARE

Registered nurses are particularly in high demand, but other positions in medical assistants and records have seen an increase



BIOSCIENCE

With the development of a coronavirus vaccine, bioscience has seen an increase in demand and projected growth in Los Angeles County, including entry-level positions



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

With so many people working from home, there has been an increased need for cyber security, computer support, network specialists and software development



RETAIL

Essential businesses such as grocery stores as well as online stores have an increased need for workers



FINANCE

Positions such as bookkeeping and audit clerks have seen a resilience in the current economy

Amy Campbell, director of adult education at Mt. San Jacinto College, knows the importance of digital literacy for students, both in the classroom and in the job market.
PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY CAMPBELL

‘WE WANT TO DO RIGHT BY OUR STUDENTS’

Adult education prepares students for tech-savvy job market

BY ANNE STOKES

In today’s job market, it’s hard to find a job that doesn’t involve a computer in some way. No matter the industry, digital literacy is no longer an optional skill for employees or job seekers to have.

“I was a manager 30 years ago, I spent 10 years in business management and I taught people how to interview. That was a

“Every field, every position has some aspect of digital literacy.”

Amy Campbell
Director of Adult Education, Mt. San Jacinto College

whole different world then,” says Amy Campbell, director of adult education at Mt. San Jacinto College. “Every job is online. ... How to interview and how to apply now is online.”

Fortunately, adult education programs offer a variety of digital literacy courses and opportunities. There are courses designed for beginners with no computer experience, software program certifications for professionals, as well as pathways for students looking to start a career in computers or information technology.

“We have digital media classes and we actually make them for entry (level students). As long as you know how to turn on a computer and send an email, you can take digital media and

all of a sudden be able to create PowerPoint slides,” Campbell explains. “‘Intro to Digital’ is actually a non-credit class that leads into the credit pathway. ... (It’s) a good entry for credit students who don’t have the skills ... and our students who are interested in that field.”

Campbell notes that while some students want to start a career in computer technology, many are looking to incorporate those skills into other fields and educational goals. To include those students, many adult programs embed computer usage in other courses such as business, high school diploma and equivalency programs (GED), and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. This ensures students who need to increase their computer skills aren’t excluded due to language or access barriers.

“We used to do (GED testing) on paper, but we started doing it online because when they had to take the actual GED test online, they felt more comfortable,” she says. “ESL students, when they had to take the tests for our class, they would take them online and their level of basic skills on the computer rose.”

Adult education programs enable students to build better lives for themselves. In today’s world, that means knowing how to work a computer.

“Every field, every position has some aspect of digital literacy,” Campbell says. “I think we would be irrelevant or out of touch if we didn’t include that in all instruction because now is a necessity. ... We want to do right by our students.”

For more information on adult education in Riverside County, visit www.adulteducationriversidecounty.com.



WHAT’S IN YOUR ADULT EDUCATION TOOLBOX?



TRANSITION TOOLS FOR K-12 ADULT AND NONCREDIT STUDENTS:

Integrated Education & Training

Guided Pathways

Dual Enrollment

Contextualized Instruction

Immigrant Integration

Career Counseling

Competency Based Education

Pre-apprenticeship

Transition Specialists

Career Pathways

Federal Co-Enrollment

PUTTING STUDENTS ON THE RIGHT PATH

Adult school helps students transition into new careers or resume old ones

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

PaoLing Guo, principal of ABC Adult School in Cerritos, has seen many changes in her 30 years with the ABC Unified School District. Coping with a pandemic is the latest wrinkle.

“Normally, we have over 10,000 students,” she says. “Even with (COVID) restrictions, we have more than 8,000 unduplicated students.”

Principal for 13 years and assistant principal for seven years before that, Guo answered questions about adult education and how it helps students transition into careers.

Tell us about ABC Adult School.

We’re the fifth largest adult school in the state. We offer all comprehensive adult education programs. (In 2020), our largest program still is English as a Second Language (ESL). That’s why we put such an emphasis on transition. Students learning English, at the same time, can learn skills for career education.

What about costs?

We offer 12 different career pathways and 11 qualify for Pell Grants (federal student aid); the exception is dental assistant and it will qualify for financial aid (in 2021). A lot of our students are able to benefit. They can get their career training at little or no cost. A Pell Grant for \$6,000, for example; \$2,000 would go towards tuition and the other \$4,000 would be able to cover living and other educational costs.

Our goal is to keep very, very low tuition and help students with their financial needs.

Were any of your programs impacted by the pandemic?

ESL. We saw over 4,000 ESL students last year. This year, our ESL students dropped by one third. They felt they were not able to continue with school. Unfortunately, some students give up trying. For these students, a lack of computer access and skills can be a barrier. They prefer 1-on-1 learning to logging into a Google classroom; they don’t have the desire or devices to study online.

That’s one reason we’re trying to reopen (to in-person instruction) as much as possible. ...We need to do something more, but we have limited resources. We got no (federal) CARES Act support; that money went to only K-12 (education).

Which programs stayed strong?

Our job training program is doing really well. So is our academic program. Those two major programs saw a small drop off, but nothing drastic.



PaoLing Guo, principal of ABC Adult School in Cerritos, is proud of her students’ success.
PHOTO COURTESY OF PAOLING GUO

Our medical programs are really strong. We have dynamic instructors who are connected with the community. The most popular programs are medical assistant, medical coding, pharmacy technician, dental assistant and LVN (licensed vocational nurse).

What other career paths are popular?

Cosmetology is also very, very popular. After Bellflower dropped its program, we created the ABC Beauty Academy. Our students have been very successful in skills competitions.

Accounting also is very popular. A lot of ESL students who may not have the language skills (for some career programs) do have the math skills they need to succeed in accounting. Their transition into that career pathway can be more successful and faster. ... They’re able to get a job while still mastering language skills.

How else does adult school help students transition?

One third of our students came to the United States with a college degree. They already have training and skills that they learned in their own country before coming here. They’re ready to adapt to new career requirements and get licenses in the U.S.

“One third of our students came to the United States with a college degree. ... They’re ready to adapt to new career requirements and get licenses in the U.S.”

PaoLing Guo
Principal, ABC Adult School

We help them reach those goals. Instead of two years or more in a program, it may only take them a short while. They can adapt very quickly. The only thing they need to learn is the terminology and new requirements for their careers here.

That’s why transition (help) is really needed and so crucial. They’re here. They want a career. They want to be successful in the United States. Luckily, ABC has everything in place to help them be successful.

*Learn more about ABC Adult School
at www.abcadultschool.edu.*

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