



Adult Basic Education

**Creating
Opportunities
for Washington's
Emerging
Workforce**



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Washington state is on the verge of a crisis of not having enough educated employees to be competitive. Community and technical colleges and community-based organizations providing adult basic education have the ability to help divert this crisis.

Well educated baby-boomers are leaving the workforce. More people are entering the workforce who lack high school diplomas and English language skills. To add to the complexity, companies need employees with even higher levels of skills, knowledge and creativity to adapt to new technologies to solve problems.

Adult basic education providers are the only ones giving a second chance to adults who for whatever reason missed out on education while they were young, adults who graduated with skills that were adequate to that time but not today, and teaching adults English as a second language. Equipping these people with skills, knowledge and creativity is critical to keep the economy moving.

In today's economy, and particularly tomorrow's, ideas, knowledge, imagination and creativity will be the added value to the economy's strength. Increasingly, skill-based jobs require greater levels of knowledge.

The state's current economy is expanding divides in society. These divides between the haves and have nots are limiting the state's prosperity. This plan establishes goals that will elevate more of society and shrink these divides. For the individual, there is great pay off with higher lifetime income and less unemployment. For society the pay offs are sizeable: more competitive employers, a more prosperous state, reduced social services costs, stronger families for the future.

This is where the Adult Basic Education State Plan serves as a critical benchmark and sets important goals for the future, which will help organize the 34 community and technical colleges, and approximately 20 community-based organizations. The goals are: to increase the number of people in adult basic education programs, help more people reach their educational goals, and increase society's understanding of the importance of this education.

I look forward to working with you to meet the goals of this plan as we improve the lives of Washington residents and the strength of our state's economy.

Charles N. Earl

Charles N. Earl, Executive Director

Goals:

In order to better serve adult learners and Washington state, the adult basic education system will:

1 Increase access by serving more students, providing instruction in flexible locations and times, and using multiple methods for teaching and learning.

Effectiveness indicator:

- The number of adults enrolled in adult basic education, including basic skills, GED and English as a second language programs.

2 Increase student outcomes, prioritizing those that help students and the state meet its economic and workforce goals.

Effectiveness indicators:

- The number of adults enrolled in adult basic education who increase their literacy skills;
- The number of ABE students who find or keep a job after receiving ABE instruction;
- The number of ABE students who transition to post-secondary education or training programs;
- The number of ABE students who complete post-secondary education or training programs and gain employment;
- The number of students who receive GEDs and other high school credentials.

3 Increase public awareness and understanding about adult basic education and the way it assists Washington state to meet its economic and workforce goals.

Effectiveness indicators:

- Public perception of the value of adult basic education;
- Public perception of the effectiveness of adult basic education.

One in six adults in Washington state need to increase their ability to

- **read, write, and speak in English**
- **use math and computers**
- **communicate and work with others, and**
- **solve problems.**

Adult basic education providers help these adults develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed as

- **workers,**
- **parents, and**
- **community members.**

The need for adult basic education programs is big and getting bigger, and the stakes are high. The success of the state's economy depends on a skilled workforce that is highly productive and can quickly adapt to change. We can't afford to leave anyone behind. Our future workforce depends on adults who are currently under-prepared. Currently, 87 percent of adult immigrants who lack English language skills are not receiving the necessary training, and 94 percent of the adults who lack high school diplomas are not receiving GED preparation.

Fortunately, Washington's adult literacy education system is committed to providing more adults with the literacy and job-training skills they need to be successful in the

workplace and in life. This state plan sets a path for our state's economy and all of its citizens to be more successful.



After the birth of her fifth child, Lilli Hansell knew that she needed at least a high school diploma to have a chance for a job with benefits.

With the support of instructors at Edmonds Community College, she earned her GED and a two-year degree in social and human services. She plans to complete her bachelor's degree.

"I'd like to work as a coordinator at a shelter for women and families."

Adult basic education - A life-changing opportunity

Adult basic education can be a powerful, life-changing opportunity for the one in six Washington adults who lacks the literacy skills he or she needs to succeed as a worker, parent and citizen. Literacy programs are the cornerstone to a viable workforce, a vital economy and strong families.

Adults at the Lowest Literacy Levels

Usually Can	Usually Cannot
Answer personal questions in English, like their name, age, or country of origin.	Carry on a complete conversation in English about a topic of general interest.
Sign their names on any written document.	Identify and provide the background information on a social security card application.
Provide one piece of information on a new form, if it's something they already know like a social security number or birth date.	Match two or more pieces of information on a form, like determining what benefits they will get from a table of benefits that is based on monthly pay.
Find a bus number on a bus or on the signs at a bus stop.	Determine from the schedule how long the wait will be before the next bus comes.
Find an important piece of information in a sports article.	Find multiple pieces of information, or information that is not direct or literal in a sports article.
Carry out simple math tasks when they already know the task and the numbers, like adding up the amounts of two checks on a bank deposit.	Carry out multiple math tasks based on unfamiliar material, like using two advertisements to decide if it's cheaper to rent or buy a television for six months.
Find the name of street they already know on a simple map.	Find the intersection of two streets they don't know on a street map.

Adult basic education is key to Washington state's future

Adults who lack high school level skills and knowledge and who speak English as a second language will make up of the growth in Washington's workforce for the next 20 years. Because they are a part of the state's fastest growing population groups, their success is critical to the health of the state's economy and its families.

- 495,000 Washington adults 18 and over lacked high school credentials in 2000. The percentage, around 17%, has remained constant for some time.¹
- 260,000 adults 18 and over identified themselves as unable to speak or understand English well in 2000. In addition, many of them were not literate in their native language. These immigrants and refugees are the fastest growing part of the state's population. If this population continues to increase at the current rate, that number will grow to at least 390,000 by 2010.²

Rapid growth in the number of adults without high school credentials and English language skills has a powerful impact on Washington's current and future workforce.

Employers, employees, public education, public health and entire communities will benefit from more people with increased basic skills. Today, they are all faced with decreasing resources, increasing financial burdens and an unstable future.

Our state's employers face a shortage of skilled workers today.

- Even at the height of the recession in 2003, 45 percent of Washington state employers had a hard time finding qualified applicants for openings. The results are decreases in output and quality, sales are lost and the bottom line suffers. Some employers even moved out of the state.³
- When more than 100 employers participated in a national literacy program at their workplaces (including a group of 10 in Washington state), 80 percent of them identified improved quality of work as a benefit. Of these employers surveyed, 71 percent were able to promote from within after employees participated.⁴



"Adult basic education is the single biggest issue facing America's workforce."

Dennis Jones, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

Mr. Jones is widely recognized for his work with states and college systems in strategic planning and information for decision making.

Underprepared workers, like their employers, will benefit from increased skills.

- Over 40 percent of American workers have low literacy skills.⁵
- Low-literate adults have the hardest time getting jobs and are often the first to be laid off.⁶
- Experts predict that as few as 10 percent of all new jobs will be available to those who lack a high school diploma.⁷
- Even low-wage jobs, in industries from hospitality to agriculture, demand literacy as well as specific job knowledge. Employees need to continue to learn so that they may continue to advance in the workforce.⁸

Sensitech is a multi-national firm that provides temperature monitors, software and consulting services that protect temperature-sensitive products. Since 1998, the Redmond plant has partnered with Lake Washington Technical College to offer on-site English classes. In 2006, 58 percent of their manufacturing team members graduated from or are attending ESL classes.

According to Production Manager Kay Bakun, "A simple walk through of our manufacturing floor demonstrates the impact the program has had on our operations. The on-site ESL program has made day-to-day operations smoother and played a key role in helping reduce errors and improve productivity. I can't imagine, nor do I want to, where Sensitech would be today without it."



Current students recap how their English class is helping them at work:

- **apply for a job.**
- **ask some questions on the job.**
- **read the signs in the company, and also in the stores and on the road.**
- **read memos.**
- **communicate with my co-workers and supervisors.**
- **feel a little calm and sure when I want to say something.**
- **write better with less mistakes. It's important because I have to write messages by email to my co-workers. Also, I fill out a lot of paperwork.**

**Maria Esparza
Pokun Lu
Nadezhda Kemerova**

**Alexander Rizo
Esmeralda Salazar
Juan Malaquias**

**Gloria Juaregui
Le Tran**

Ernidira Jones came to Tacoma Community College's family literacy program to learn English so that she could be a better mother to her three children. By the spring of 2006 her children were 7, 3, and 1 1/2 and she had completed the English program and begun working on a GED.

Even though Ernidira admits that she wakes up many days tired and with lots to do, she knows "that first I need to go to school to learn.



Because of this program, I am now able to go to my kids' schools and ask the teachers how they are doing. I can now call the doctor and tell what is wrong with my kids.

"I feel great when my daughter asks me to help her and I can. We can be our children's counselors and teachers when they are not in school. Our children will excel because we are here to help them.

"I tell my kids that if you want to be somebody, you have to go to school."

There are more adults who speak English as their first language who lack high school diplomas and basic skills.

- Out of the students who are expected to graduate from high school, one out of three do not.⁹
- Adults without a diploma have a six percent higher unemployment rate than those with a diploma.¹⁰
- In Washington, high school graduates earn \$9,000 more each year than those without a diploma. Earning some college adds at least another \$6,000 to that amount.¹¹
- A family living in poverty is seven times more likely to be headed by a high school dropout than a family not living in poverty.¹²

Tomorrow's workforce will be more dependent on immigrants, refugees and others who don't yet have the skills they need.

- As the predominantly white baby boomers who make up a core of the state's workforce retire beginning in 2008, the workforce will be even more dependent on our diverse populations to fill skilled positions.¹³
- Latino/Hispanics made up only 3.8 percent of the civilian workforce in 1990. By 2010, our state's Latino/Hispanic population will make up 15.3 percent of the workforce.¹⁴
- Currently more than 60 languages are spoken in Washington homes.¹⁵

Washington's growing diversity presents challenges and opportunities for public education.

- Immigration is the driving engine for our national population growth, where one in five children has a parent who is an immigrant.¹⁶ In this state, in little more than 10 years, there has been a near doubling of the population for whom English is a new language.¹⁷

For those who know about community colleges, they are places where a new start can be made. One of those people who found a new start was college transfer student Christian Guerrero. His life has been about working hard and striving for success.

After leaving school and coming to America from Mexico, Christian realized he needed more education to succeed in this country. He found his first opportunity at a local community college, where he earned his GED, learned English and how to weld. These skills served him well, helping him find a job; however, an economic downturn eventually cost him his job.



Looking for a new path to follow, Christian found a second start at South Seattle Community College. The college's Worker Retraining program started him on an educational path that eventually found Christian deciding to pursue a four-year degree. With the college's preparatory courses he was able to bring his math and English skills up to a college level, begin taking credit courses and start on the path toward a bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering at Seattle University.

Along the way, staff and faculty at the college encouraged Christian to jump headlong into the college experience. In 2004 he was named to the All-Washington Academic Team and personally recognized by Gov. Gary Locke. He completed his 2005 academic year as president of the college's student government. And possibly the highlight of his stay at the college, Christian was the student speaker at his own graduation in spring 2005.

- Almost one million of our citizens and their children are at risk of becoming more impoverished and even more dependent without the opportunity to improve their skills.¹⁸
- Across the country and in our state, children whose parents have less than a high school education score lowest on reading and other standardized tests. When parents' literacy improves, so does their children's health, likelihood of staying in school, and ability to become employed.¹⁹
- The U.S. Department of Education put it simply: "The single most significant predictor of children's literacy is their mother's literacy."²⁰

Low literacy decreases the effectiveness and raises the cost of the health care system.

- The reading level of written materials, such as prescriptions, immunization schedules and instructions for care after surgery is well above the ability level of many adults, one in five of whom read at or below the fifth grade level.²¹

Big Bend Community College in Moses Lake offers a Commercial Truck Driving program for agricultural workers. The course is offered six days a week on evenings and weekends during off-seasons. Instructors use group and computerized lessons, as well as time in the trucks to teach English as a second language, and driving information and skills.

Forty-eight Spanish-speaking men and women have completed the course work in the two years the program has been offered, a retention rate of more than 90 percent. All the completers got their licenses and better paying jobs. They passed their licensing tests with all the endorsements in English.

The program has produced additional benefits. A number of graduates, their spouses and other family members are not only continuing to learn English at Big Bend, but are also enrolled in GED and citizenship classes.



- Health care experts estimate that the costs of adult illiteracy to the health care system are in the range of \$8-12 billion a year.²²

Communities benefit from more literate citizens.

- Less than half as many low-literate Washingtonians participate in community organizations each month.²³
- Low literate adults are almost twice as likely not to vote as are literate citizens.²⁴

Despite the fact that many low-literate people are ready, willing and able to work, there are many barriers:

While much has been done to increase literacy skills, there are still significant hurdles to overcome with the help of additional money and policy changes.

Monetary resources continue to shrink.

- State and federal funds for adult basic education are declining.
- Community and technical colleges, which provide about 95 percent of the adult basic education in this state, have reduced services due to budget cuts.
- Most people with low literacy skills work irregular hours, have one or more part-time jobs or are working at times when classes are available.

Policies need to accommodate ABE students.

- Students in adult basic education classes don't qualify for financial aid. Without the assistance that is essential and available to other needy students, they struggle with the demands of living, transportation and childcare expenses.

Washington’s adult basic education system is currently addressing these high stakes issues. In the next five years, progress will accelerate.

Adult basic education programs serve the most challenging students in the higher education system. While these students bring real-life competencies that allow them to function as workers, parents and citizens, they also bring real-time needs. They take classes to improve their basic skills so that they can be more successful. Almost all of them are focused on the skills that lead to better paying jobs. At the same time, adult basic education students have substantial learning and skills gaps. Their skill deficits often require more time and effort to address than the demands of their jobs and families allow.

Adult basic education providers are especially knowledgeable about their students and are highly skilled at providing training that changes lives in very tangible ways. In addition to these instructors’ innate skills, they also follow a strict set of reporting standards, assessment measures and evaluations to assure they are accountable.

Adult basic education providers:

- Compete for funding based on 13 criteria defined in federal law;
- Gather and report individual student data quarterly, documenting 24 separate pieces of information that include demographics, hours of attendance and learning gains;
- Use common standardized assessments to measure and document gains;
- Address 17 state and federal performance targets in the areas of learning, getting or keeping jobs, and transition to higher education or training;
- Receive funds based on performance.



Tacoma Community House has served low-income residents of the Hilltop area since 1910. Education and employment services have always been at the center of their contribution. Their rich history includes serving a range of different ethnic and cultural groups, including waves of immigrant populations.

According to Education Director Debbie Reck, they owe their success to the attention they pay to meeting the goals of their students and their community.

She says, “Here at Tacoma Community House we embrace accountability. As the director of a community-based educational program, I have to be accountable to my students, my funders and my community. Without tracking student achievement and having the numbers to back up our successes, our stories are hollow.

“We would continue to put forth the effort regardless of whether or not it was required.”

Governor Chris Gregoire declared the second annual Adult Basic Literacy Week in November 2005. She met with students, employers and community leaders in Snohomish County.

Community and technical colleges and community-based organizations funded by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges worked with local business and community leaders to celebrate the role that adult basic education plays in building better skills for better workers.

Almost 2,000 employers participated in Adult Literacy Week, and many of them were recognized for the support they give their employees and education partners.

Thirty-two colleges and 13 community-based organizations collaborated on events and media campaigns, resulting in:

- **coverage in at least 17 newspapers, as well as on radio and television stations across the state;**
- **participation of state and civic leaders including the governor, legislators and congressional staff, mayors and city councils, county commissioners, college trustees, and members of civic organizations.**

Since Adult Literacy week, the key message about the link between increased skills and knowledge and better jobs and lives continues to be repeated. Not only are colleges and CBOs using that message, but others are voicing it also, including the media, the governor and members of our congressional delegation.

Future Goals

There is a critical need to invest resources in these neglected populations. More money will be needed to move beyond these goals to serve more people. There are a significant number of people who could be served if more resources were available.

You can help Washington state create opportunities for the growing number of adults who need to increase their skills and knowledge in order to succeed as workers, parents and community members. At the same time, you will help ensure that we have the strong workforce our state's economy needs.

By communicating to other active members and leaders of your community the value of adult basic education to our state and its citizens, you can help increase understanding and encourage local, state and national leaders to invest in the future of Washington.

Volunteer to support learners and adult literacy programs. Most providers need help that ranges from tutoring a student to working as a classroom aid, or providing assistance in planning special events such as graduations. Donations to scholarship funds and other financial assistance programs also are accepted.

You can act as a link between adults who might need services or be ready to volunteer. A complete directory of services is available on line at www.literacynow.info. A hotline also provides statewide information. Call 1-888-444-5744.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age in its programs and activities.

Adult Literacy Week - Growing Awareness and Support

Support the Power of Possibility
Better skills = better jobs.
Adult Literacy Week
 October 31 - November 5

In October, Washington State employers struggled to fill over 50,000 jobs in nursing, technology, administration, transportation and construction.

One in six adults in our state lacks the basic education and skills to succeed in the workplace, working two or three jobs just to make ends meet.

By supporting adult literacy programs in our community, you can help open doors to the possibility of a better life for hundreds of your neighbors, while building the educated workforce that industry desperately needs.

Get involved. Sponsor a workplace literacy site. Pay the paid time off for employees to pursue their education. You will yield dividends for your business and the community.

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Bates **CLOVER PARK** **PIRCE** **TACOMA COLLEGE** **The Technical Education Mission**

680.7260 589.5760 864.3181 566.5144 383.4466

Call one of the organizations above to find out how you can make a difference.

For Nicole Lee, Clark College was The Next Step™ for the literacy skills she needed on her career path to WaferTech.



Clark College
The Next Step
www.clark.edu

Big Bend Community College
 7962 Chamite Street NE • Moses Lake, WA 98937 • www.bigbend.edu

Skills For A Lifetime
 Professional/Technical Education Programs

- Prepare for high demand jobs
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Better SKILLS
Better JOBS




Better skills. Better jobs.

Adult Literacy Week 2005
 October 31 to November 4
By special proclamation of Governor Christine Gregoire

Worker and staff shortages abound in health care and technology fields. Help Washington's community and technical colleges do more to get hard-working adults ready for high-demand jobs.

Your investment in adult literacy skills provides the fuel needed to drive the King County economy.

Support Highline Community College adult literacy programs. Call (206) 878-3710, ext. 3627, today.



At Highline, I not only learned English, but also about American culture and the workplace. Now I am working and taking college-level classes to pursue a bachelor's degree in Human Services.
 - Sheelan Shameen, Highline student, war refugee, speaker of three languages

HIGHLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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Program for Learning, Employment

... Assessment, GED, Employment, and Retention (EAGER) program students from welfare to work.

... a third of residents receiving welfare benefits in north Snohomish seek high school diplomas or GEDs.

... 68% of EAGER students received their GED; 55% found jobs in three months.

... a 2005 Governor's Award for Best Practices in Workforce Development

Puget Sound Business Journal October 28-November 3, 2005

"...an increasingly diverse workplace is driving the need for additional adult basic education and English language training..."

Better Skills— BETTER JOBS

Thank you to the more than 50 Puget Sound foundations, businesses, and cities for supporting hundreds of hard-working adults to get better skills and better jobs in these industries:

- Construction
- Food Processing
- Landscaping
- Health Care
- Manufacturing
- Electronics

We invite you to join these progressive organizations by partnering with your local Adult Basic Education and English-as-a-Second Language program.



EVERETT COLLEGE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
LAKE WASHINGTON TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Together, we can provide the workforce Washington needs for the 21st century.

For more information contact Kim Chapman at 206-528-4521

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Additional material about the following topics can be found on the WEB site of the Adult Basic Education office of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu>.

For assistance please contact

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