



Adult Education & Family Literacy Week

36 MILLION ADULTS in the United States struggle with basic academic skills, making it difficult to function effectively as workers, parents, citizens, and consumers in today's society.

Adult literacy intersects with almost every socioeconomic issue—parenting, health, workforce development, and poverty. To address these issues effectively, we must invest in educating parents and workers. Adult education helps break the cycles of intergenerational illiteracy and poverty by giving adults the skills they need to be successful as workers and parents.

The value of adult low literacy to our economy in additional wages and the reduction in costs for public support programs is estimated at more than \$200 billion per year. Increasing adults' level of education is a sound investment. Yet, public funding of adult education has declined over the last 15 years. Most adult education programs have long student waiting lists. They are able to serve only a fraction of adults who need services.

INCOME INEQUALITY

Low literacy has an adverse effect on the employability and earnings of American adults. The widening “skills gap” continues to have an increasing impact on income inequality. Adults without a high school diploma are more than twice as likely to be unemployed, working in low-wage jobs, living in poverty, and relying on government aid programs as those with higher levels of education.

Did You Know?

- Nearly 30% of adults with household incomes at or below the poverty line do not have high school credentials.
- Individuals with high school credentials earn about \$10,000 more annually than those without.
- Education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and Hispanic origin.
- Roughly half of the U.S.'s adult immigrants report that they speak English “less than very well,” yet by 2030, nearly one in five U.S. workers will be an immigrant.
- Approximately 37% of adults enrolled in adult education are unemployed.
- By 2018, 63% of all U.S. jobs will require education beyond high school. Yet, nearly half of the workforce has only a high school education or less and/or low English proficiency.



Raul's Story

Raul was born in a small town in Mexico. But economic, political, and social conditions of his country caused him to immigrate to the United States. He was 18 years old with \$20 in his pocket, and a piece of paper with the address of his uncle. And a huge desire to live the “American Dream.” The beginning was tough. He had to share a small room, and did not speak English. He got a job in a local restaurant washing dishes to support himself. It did not seem like the American dream that everybody spoke about. He enrolled in ELL classes and attended every morning before work. After three years he took the GED test, and began attending college. Stress, fatigue and a lot of coffee were his daily bread. But he did it! He graduated. Raul says, “If you are dedicated and a hard worker, you can find success. You can become what you want to become. You can live your dream.”

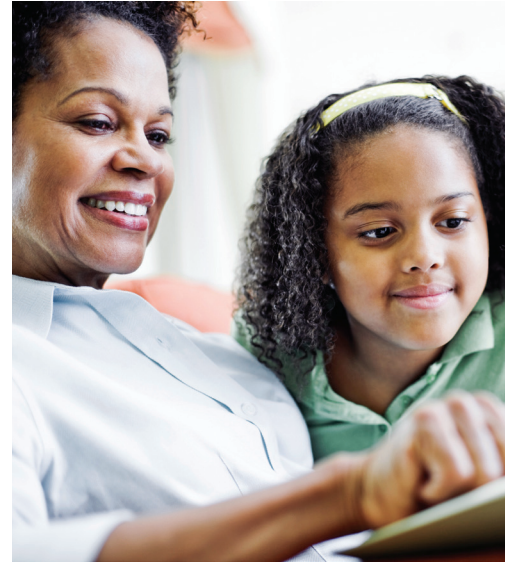
For more information, visit www.national-coalition-literacy.org.

PARENTING

Research shows that focusing on educating children without also addressing their parents' needs for basic education and training will not solve the academic achievement gap. Children of low-literate parents are more likely to get poor grades, display behavioral problems, have high absentee rates, repeat school years, or drop out. Low-literate parents who improve their own skills are more likely to have a positive impact on their children's educational achievements and have children who stay in school longer.

Did You Know?

- A mother's education level is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors such as neighborhood and family income.
- Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels (compared to 25% of children in the lowest reading level overall).
- Children with parents who hold professional jobs hear more than 33 million words by the time they begin school, compared with 10 million words for children from more disadvantaged groups.



Cleo's Story

As part owner in a trucking company, Cleo built a successful and thriving business. But Cleo had a secret that she kept from everyone—she couldn't read. She was an easy target for a dishonest business partner, and was bamboozled out of her business. In 2009, Cleo moved to Alabama to be near family. She heard about a tutoring program at Goodwill Easter Seals, and went from not being able to read at all to a fifth grade level in just a couple of years. "It makes me so happy when I can read notes from my children's teachers, street signs, and mail. I don't think you can imagine what it feels like not being able to read." Cleo is well on the way to conquering everything that has kept her from succeeding in life, and she is making sure that nothing stops her children from being successful.



CALL TO ACTION!

- Call on your elected representatives to support adult education.
- Support your local adult education program.
- Urge employers to invest in adult education.

Visit NCL's website and let us know how you're committing to celebrating AEFL Week!



For more information, visit www.national-coalition-literacy.org.