

Profiles in Success

Adult Education

Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and English as a Second Language

in Kyle, New Braunfels, and Fort Worth

Within the Texas workforce system, adult education programs play a crucial role in developing a well-educated and highly skilled workforce for the state of Texas. These programs provide basic education and literacy to people over 16 years of age who are not in school and do not have a high school diploma or equivalency. Generally speaking, adult education is geared toward individuals with low levels of education, low levels of proficiency in English, or both.

The Texas Administrative Code defines adult education as basic and secondary instruction, along with services, for adults. Adult basic education (ABE) services consist of instruction in reading, writing, English, and math, including functional context. Adult secondary education (ASE) services include instruction in reading, writing, literature, math, science, and social studies below the college credit level. English as a second language (ESL) refers to instruction for adults who are beyond the age of compulsory education, and lack proficiency in English.

The system of delivering adult education services in Texas is quite complex, and involves a wide range of organizations functioning at the community, regional and state levels. Adult

education falls under both state and federal mandates, with such legislation defining program scope and determining funding allocation. At the federal level, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act under Title II of the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) defines and supports adult education for the United States (U.S.). At the state level, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has statutory responsibility for adult education in Texas. Other legislation exists that calls for collaboration in programs and projects between the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas

Higher Education Coordinating Board, and TEA.

TEA is responsible for the delivery system of adult education in Texas. TEA created and manages several adult education leadership projects, such as the Adult Literacy Clearinghouse

Project, Project GREAT, the Texas Family Literacy Resource Center and the Adult Education Credential Project to support local adult education programs. Each of these projects is associated with an institute of higher learning in Texas. For example, the Adult Literacy Clearinghouse Project is run by the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning or TCALL, which is at the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University.



As TEA administers adult education under Title II of the WIA, it coordinates this federal funding with matching state funds for adult education programs. TEA retains discretionary grant management, but contracts out administration of adult education to Texas LEARNS, the State Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy, located at the Harris County Department of Education. Texas LEARNS provides management, program assistance, and other support services to Texas adult education and family literacy providers. Its primary focus is on technical assistance and services related to ABE, ASE, and ESL, including for programs taught through adult education cooperatives that receive federal and state funding through TEA.

There are professional and volunteer associations that do not receive funding through TEA that also provide adult education in Texas. For example, the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education and Literacy Texas meet annually and provide professional development for adult education teachers and administrators. There are also advocacy groups such as the Texas Council for Adult Basic Education and the Texas Family Literacy Organization.

Funding for adult education in Texas comes from diverse local, state, and federal sources, but

the majority comes from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education under WIA. The Even Start Family Literacy program, also administered by the U.S. Department of Education under the Even Start Family Literacy, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is another source of funding.

Federal funding is distributed according to a nationwide allotment formula where each state receives a basic allotment, and then an additional allotment depending on the number of “qualifying adults” residing in that state. Qualifying adults are individuals who meet certain criteria such as being over the compulsory age of school attendance and not having a high school diploma or equivalent.

In addition, some federal funding comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant. TEA participates in the drawdown of federal funds by submitting a five-year statewide plan for adult education in Texas and providing a 25 percent matching of funds and/or in-kind services.

The profiles below focus on individuals who have completed ABE, ASE or ESL programs administered by by TEA through Texas LEARNS.

Adult Basic Education - Profiles in Success



Having grown up in Mexico, Esther Ramos moved to Chicago when she was 14 years old. Being the oldest of four children, Esther had

the responsibility of taking care of her younger siblings while their mother worked. When she married at the age of 18, she and her husband established a household for her three younger siblings. Both Esther and her husband held good jobs with General Binding Corporation, an office supplies manufacturer. They worked for this company thirty years and despite no high school diploma, Esther eventually achieved a stable and comfortable hourly wage.

Esther had three children of her own, and tragically, one developed bone cancer when she was only 11 years old. Esther spent many long hours where her daughter received treatment and eventually became a volunteer in the nutritional program, working with the children in the pediatric cancer ward at the University of Chicago

Medical Center. She was the only parent who was consistently available to coax sick children to eat and it was Esther's daughter who pointed out how important her presence was to all the children on the floor. Her daughter asked her to promise she would continue to come for the benefit of the kids, and at that time Esther made a personal resolution. She promised herself that if the opportunity ever presented itself, she would study, learn and work in the medical profession.

Years later and rather suddenly in 2008, General Binding Corporation began experiencing financial difficulty and the Ramoses were among many employees who were let go. As the company struggled through reorganization, the couple lost their pensions, but they did receive stipends for college-level training. However, as a prerequisite to attending college, Esther needed to earn her General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Esther's younger sister lives in Kyle, and as she and her husband were trying to make plans for themselves during the economic downturn, Esther came to Texas for a visit. Realizing the economic climate was better here, the Ramoses decided to move to Texas, leaving two daughters already settled in Chicago and Washington State.

Upon arriving in Texas, Esther's husband found part-time work as a bus driver for Hays Independent School District while she geared up to enter postsecondary education. She registered for GED preparation classes at the Kyle Learning Center, one of several sites operated by Community Action, Inc., in Hays County. Community Action is a nonprofit organization that provides numerous services to its community, including adult basic education supported by the Texas Education Agency through federal adult education funding.

Esther needed to be enrolled in higher education by February 2010 in order to take advantage of the stipend offered by her prior employer. This meant that earning her GED expeditiously was of utmost importance. She began her coursework at the Kyle Learning Center in August 2009 and worked at a frenetic pace for the next six months, taking both morning and evening classes. She and her husband did not have a car, so she walked to and from classes daily.

The Kyle Learning Center soon became Esther's "home away from home." In addition to regularly scheduled classes, Esther received supplemental tutoring. Math was especially challenging, and not being a native English-speaker, the team at the learning center was able to accommodate her needs by pairing her with a Spanish-speaking math tutor. In January 2010, Esther passed all five parts of the GED and received her certificate.

True to the personal commitment she had made to her daughter and to herself so many years earlier, Esther enrolled for medical assistant training at CyberTex Institute of Technology in Austin. There, she earned three certificates and after a 360-hour clinical internship, qualified as a Certified Medical Assistant, Certified EKG Technician, and a Certified Phlebotomy Technician. In addition, over the course of the year that she earned her certificates, she worked as a volunteer at Seton Medical Center Hays in Kyle.

During this time, the adult basic education teachers and staff at the Kyle Learning Center continued to help Esther. The Kyle Learning Center also helped her sharpen her interviewing skills and coached her as she prepared for an upcoming interview for permanent employment at Seton. Esther valued the support and friendship extended to her by the Center.

In March 2011, Seton offered Esther a job, but conditionally. After observing her unfaltering dedication to her volunteer position, Esther's Seton supervisor knew that she was the kind of person their hospital wanted as an employee. However, her technical certification scores were below the 85 percent that Seton requires, and Esther was asked if, at Seton's cost, she would retake her classes to earn higher scores. Esther enrolled at Austin Community College and earned certificates for Basic Phlebotomy Skills and Aseptic Techniques and Skills, receiving a score of 98 percent.

Currently, Esther is working full-time, with benefits, as a Clinical Assistant at Seton in Kyle. She performs a wide array of tasks, ranging from drawing blood and taking vital signs to conducting patient intake and outtake procedures. Esther has at last achieved her lifelong goal and is happy with the position she worked for so long to attain. But, she is not finished!

Esther is considering several options. She had originally wanted to be an oncology nurse, based on her experience years ago when her daughter was battling cancer. Now, she is thinking more along the lines of studying medicine. She imagines running a clinic where health care would be provided to people of all walks of life, regardless of their background, medical history, or insurance status.

In addition, Esther currently perceives a real need in the Hispanic community for basic information about health care. In particular, she plans to earn

certificates in nutrition and diabetes care so that she can spread the word about the importance and relatively easy steps people can take to exercise preventative care.

As Esther reflects upon the challenges she and her husband have faced these last three years, one thing remains uppermost in her mind: the adult basic education classes and continuous assistance she received at the Kyle Learning Center allowed her to advance, to meet her personal and professional goals, and to achieve the career opportunity that she has today.

Adult Secondary Education - Profiles in Success



For the last two and a half years, Ramiro Barboza, Jr., has been working as a licensed journeyman plumber in Fort Worth. Ramiro started in construction when he was 17 years old, and had actually been working in the plumbing field for over ten years. However, he faced an obstacle in moving ahead to obtain his plumber's license because he had never graduated from high school. It was the Adult Secondary Education (ASE) program that made the difference in Ramiro's life, enabling him to eventually go through the testing process to earn his license.

Ramiro struggled in high school and decided to quit when he was in the tenth grade. Since his parents would not allow him to simply stay at home, he went to work for his father's construction business where he worked as a concrete finisher for many years. Ramiro married, and unfortunately, not long after that, his father

sustained a serious injury on the job. His father's bad accident made Ramiro pause and rethink his life, and he began considering other ways to earn a living and support his family. He quit his construction job and went to work as a driver for the John Peter Smith Hospital network in Fort Worth. Ramiro did not especially enjoy this job, but one thing the driving allowed him to do was think—think about his future, think about what was missing, and think about what he could do to improve his station in life.

Ramiro understood that getting a General Educational Development (GED) certificate was essential to moving forward in his life. As good luck would have it, the dispatcher on this particular job knew of Ramiro's background in construction, and understanding Ramiro's restlessness, urged him to investigate job possibilities where her husband worked as a plumber. Ramiro went to SKIHI Enterprises, a full-service mechanical and industrial contractor, and met his future supervisor, an individual who would eventually have considerable impact upon his life.

Once employed with SKIHI, Ramiro began work as a plumber's apprentice. He completed a four-year apprenticeship through the Construction Education Foundation of North Texas and continued working for the same supervisor. However, without his GED, Ramiro could not sit for his plumber's license, nor could he advance on the pay scale. Ramiro had in fact, started work on his GED once before, but at a pace of four hours a week, he became discouraged and let it go. He

understood he would need to focus full-time, and after his wife located a GED program for him, he decided to take six months off of work in order to prepare for the GED. The class was taught at Workforce Solutions Tarrant County, Westside Workforce Center. Workforce Solutions provides the space and the Fort Worth Independent School District partners with Workforce Solutions to provide the teacher, instruction and materials.

Ramiro's teacher administered a diagnostic test and then prescribed a course of study based on his needs. His teacher stated, "Ramiro always displayed a desire to achieve, a strong work ethic, and positive attitude." Ramiro says that looking back on it, he believes he was functionally illiterate and the progress he made in those six months was remarkable. His teacher worked with him diligently and with her considerable patience and support, he was able to methodically hone his math and science skills. Ramiro eventually passed all portions of the GED, although he recalls that the essay was an immense challenge. He says without the perseverance and encouragement of his teacher, he would not have stayed with it.

There were some starts and stops for Ramiro as he reentered his work place, due to temporary layoffs at his employer's business. Ramiro took advantage

of this down time and armed with new-found confidence of having achieved his GED, he studied hard in preparation for the exam to become a licensed plumber in Texas. He traveled to Austin to take it, and he remembers being the last person to finish his test. But he had a good feeling about it, and about two weeks later, he received news that he was now a licensed plumber. He called his supervisor, and Ramiro chuckles as he recalls his supervisor saying, "Look out world, Ramiro got his license!" The two of them work well together, and Ramiro feels he is on a steady path forward. His supervisor is gradually giving Ramiro more responsibility to prepare him to take the position of foreman on future jobs.

For Ramiro, one of the most satisfying aspects of completing his ASE program and getting the GED has been that he is able to present himself as a positive role model for his children. When his oldest son began to lose interest in completing high school, Ramiro was able to point to his own personal struggle and resulting achievement. He explained that if he'd been able to do it years after leaving high school, his son could certainly make the push and graduate from high school in a timely fashion. Ramiro did indeed enjoy the satisfaction of seeing his son graduate. Now, the two of them serve as models for Ramiro's younger sons.

English as a Second Language - Profiles in Success



Originally from Honduras, Alejandra has been in Texas for five years. She has two children, one already grown, and one who will be starting second grade this fall. She is married to a Texan

of German descent, and she and her family live out in the country in Comal County. Alejandra first learned about adult education classes taught at the West Side Community Center in a local newspaper. Later, friends and her mother-in-law encouraged her to go to the center and register for classes.

The West Side Community Center in New Braunfels performs many functions. The Center houses The Institute for Public Health and Education Research, or TIPHER, which runs several programs including a health clinic, a health literacy program, a soup kitchen, diabetes awareness education and most importantly for Alejandra, English as a second language (ESL) classes.

ESL classes at the Westside Community Center are open to beginning and intermediate English

Language Learners (ELLs) and classes are supported by the Adult Education Cooperative of Seguin. The curriculum is based on the Texas Industry Specific English Second Language initiative, or TISESL, designed to familiarize students with vocabulary in the three industry sectors of healthcare, sales and service, or manufacturing. Materials for each industry sector include four modules, each with five lessons. Each lesson requires approximately ten hours of instruction, so that every ELL will have at least 200 hours of instruction that includes ESL, industry-related math, technology and employability skills.

TISESL programs were developed pursuant to the 79th Texas Legislative Session's Education Rider 82, which called for the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Education Agency to work together to train ELLs in industries where there is high demand for entry level employment. While job training and English language services have historically not been linked, this program allows adult education to be responsive to the work-related needs of adult English language learners.

After being enrolled in ESL classes for two and a half years, Alejandra was able to find entry-level employment at the Kirkwood Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in New Braunfels. The healthcare TISESL presents an excellent opportunity for her to build both vocabulary for her daily work and industry-related competencies while she is studying to learn English.

She works full-time at Kirkwood Manor, and takes ESL classes on each of her two days off, for a total of six hours of class a week. Alejandra had completed high school in Honduras and had some postsecondary secretarial training before moving to Texas. She has progressed rapidly in the TISESL program, having started at zero, and now testing at level four.

With mastery of English as her immediate goal, Alejandra aims to complete the healthcare TISESL and attain level six of the ESL program so that she can earn her General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Once she has her GED, she would like to continue on her path in the healthcare sector, and become a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA). A new CNA program is currently being designed in her area. It will be taught at the Central Texas Technology Center (CTTC), a higher education facility located in New Braunfels.

Having contracted with the Alamo Community College system for curricula, trainers and educators, the CTTC opened its doors in 2004 and is part of a broad economic development plan for New Braunfels and Comal County. This particular program will be modeled after the Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) program that has been successfully implemented in several other states. I-BEST typically has classroom teams of ESL teachers and professional-technical instructors working together to teach a course that simultaneously integrates language and vocational skills.

Before leaving her ESL training, Alejandra will participate in citizenship education also offered at the Westside Community Center. Students learn civics and social studies, and are also taught skills for navigating written applications and tests, as well as interviewing skills.

Alejandra is happy in central Texas and looks forward to a long future here. From helping her son with his homework and enrolling him in summer activities such as swimming lessons, to relaxing with her family at Landa Park, she is always conscious of the importance of language. She recognizes that fluency in English will not only help her lead a fuller life, both personally and professionally, but also enable her to give back to her community.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocates a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities.

For more information, visit: <http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/>