

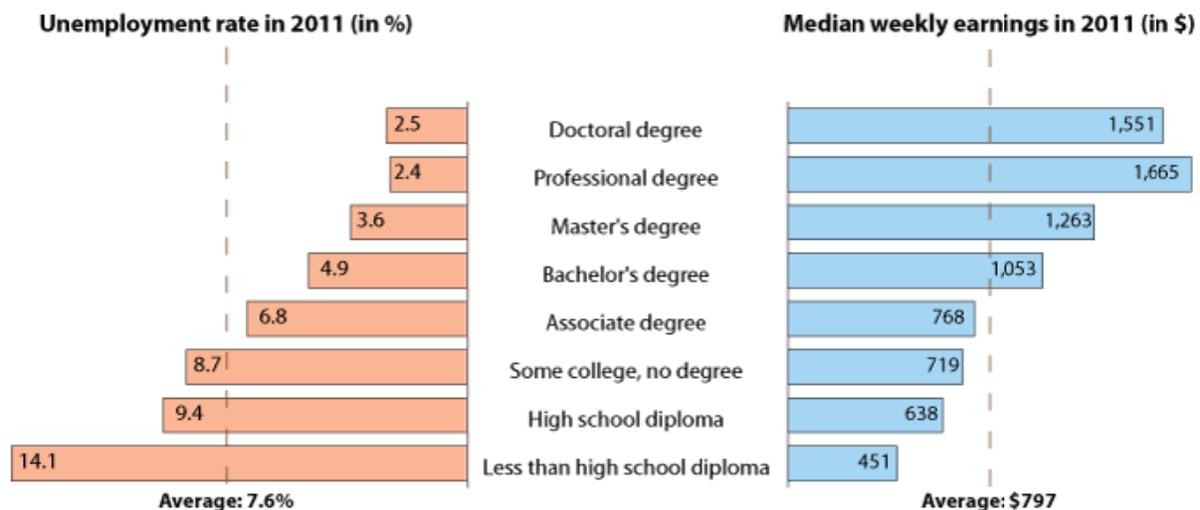


## Adult Education Promotes Economic Opportunity, Creates Stable Families and Makes America More Competitive

Nearly 30 million adults in the U.S. have below a high school education and over 24 million have English language training needs.<sup>1</sup> Even for those adults *with* a high school diploma, basic skills deficiencies have a detrimental and long-lasting impact on our nation's families and economic growth. Adult education (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act) plays a critical role in the economic opportunity of over two million adult learners each year who use these services to earn a high school equivalency, increase basic and employability skills, or improve their English language proficiency. Fully investing in adult education and reforming the program to meet the needs of today's workers will help workers and their families build a better economic future for themselves and the nation.

### PROMOTING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND CREATING STABLE FAMILIES

**Adult Education promotes economic opportunity and helps workers access higher-paying jobs.** Workers without a high school diploma are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed than those with at least some college and have significantly lower wages. In 2009-2010, 165,506 students were able to successfully achieve a high school equivalency through adult education programs and 184,704 adult learners, the most vulnerable workers, retained or entered employment in the midst of a devastating job market.<sup>2</sup>



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2011

**Adult Education helps workers become economically independent.** Workers with at least some college are less likely to be on government support, saving states and the federal government money in the longer-term. Adults without a high school diploma can cost the federal government \$671 each year in temporary cash assistance and in-kind benefits such as Medicaid, food stamps, and housing subsidies—but by supporting these individuals to obtain a high school diploma or GED, local, state, and federal governments could raise more than \$8,500 in taxes per student.<sup>3</sup>

**Adult Education improves economic opportunities for adults and their children.** The economic benefits to adults include higher salaries and benefits, enhanced employment opportunities and stability, higher savings levels, improved

working conditions, and personal and professional mobility.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, parental education has a strong and long-term impact on the educational levels of children. A mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income (NIH, 2010).<sup>5</sup> Thus supporting adults to become better educated is likely to have a multi-generational positive impact.<sup>6</sup>

## **MAKING COMMUNITIES, STATES, AND THE NATION MORE COMPETITIVE**

**Adult Education has a long-term revenue payoff for states and the federal government.** Researchers estimate that a high school diploma's contribution to the economy—including the payment of payroll, federal, and state income taxes—could amount to more than \$250,000 per graduated student over a lifetime.<sup>7</sup> Yet approximately one million high school students a year drop out before obtaining a diploma – 1.3 million in 2010.<sup>8</sup> Adult education is the key to recovering revenue losses and realizing this economic potential.

**Adult Education programs are the on-ramp for many adults with low basic skills to further education and training.** Economists predict that, by 2018, 63 percent of jobs will require a postsecondary education.<sup>9</sup> Promising models such as “career pathway bridge” programs are helping adult students transition from adult education to postsecondary education are increasing the number of basic skills students that can access good family-supporting jobs.<sup>10</sup> Recent data on the effectiveness of such models shows that students in such programs are 56 percent more likely than regular adult education students to earn college credit, 26 percent more likely to earn a certificate or degree, and 19 percent more likely to achieve learning gains on basic skills tests.<sup>11</sup>

**Adult Education contributes to the country's goal of becoming the most educated nation.** Expert analysis shows that, to remain competitive with other OECD countries, the U.S. will have to produce an additional 24 million postsecondary credentials by 2025. Given the lack of national growth in traditional-age high school students, the vast majority of this gap will need to be filled with workers currently in the workforce.<sup>12</sup>

## **WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?**

Adult education is an integral part of the solution in addressing national economic and competitiveness priorities. Yet in a time of scarce resources, fewer adult learners have been able to access programs.<sup>13</sup> We need to preserve adult education funding and reauthorize the [Workforce Investment Act](#), which has not been updated since 1998<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> National Reporting System, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Ishwar Khatiwada, Joseph McLaughlin, and Andrew Sum, with Sheila Palma, The Fiscal Consequences of Adult Educational Attainment, prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy, December 2007, <http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org/content/fiscalimpact.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> The Economic Impact of Secondary and Post-Secondary Career and Technical Education in Tennessee, Sparks BBER and The University of Memphis, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> National Coalition for Literacy, 2011, <http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/advocacy/FamilyLiteracyFactSheetfromNCFL.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Eric F. Dubow, Paul Boxer, and L. Rowell Huesmann, Long-term Effects of Parents' Education on Children's Educational and Occupational Success: Mediation by Family Interactions, Child Aggression, and Teenage Aspirations, Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, July 2009, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2853053/>.

<sup>7</sup> Center for Labor Market Studies, Left Behind in America: The Nation's Dropout Crisis, 2009, [http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/CLMS\\_2009\\_Dropout\\_Report.pdf](http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/CLMS_2009_Dropout_Report.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education Fact Sheet, October 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, Jeff Strohl. Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018, Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, June 2010, <http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/>.

<sup>10</sup> Julie Strawn, Farther, Faster: Six Promising Programs Show How Career Pathway Bridges Help Basic Skills Students Earn Credentials That Matter, CLASP, 2011, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Farther-Faster.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Zeidenberg, Sung-Woo Cho, and Davis Jenkins, Washington State's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST): New Evidence of Effectiveness (CCRC Working Paper No. 20), Community College Research Center, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Kelly and Julie Strawn, Not Just Kid Stuff Anymore: The Economic Imperative for More Adults to Complete College, June 2011, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/NotKidStuffAnymoreAdultStudentProfile-1.pdf> and Heath Prince and Vickie Choitz, The Credential Differential: The Public Return to Increasing Postsecondary Credential Attainment, April 2012, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Full-Paper-The-Credential-Differential.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Marcie Foster, Adult Education Funding Levels and Enrollment, February 2012, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/adult-ed-funding-enrollment-February-2012.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/advocacy/act\\_wiareauthor.html](http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/advocacy/act_wiareauthor.html)