



National Coalition for Literacy

If you could only read as well as a third grader, what would it be like to apply for a job?

If you couldn't speak English, what would you say to your child's teacher on Back-to-School Night?

If you couldn't do basic math, what would it be like to pay your bills each month?

Making a better life for yourself and your family is the American Dream. But that dream is out of reach to millions of Americans, native and foreign born, because they struggle to read, write, do basic math, and speak English—and we're all paying the price. It's a problem we can't fix without your help.

A hidden problem

Across this country, one in six adults struggles with low literacy, one in three with basic math, and one in ten speaks limited English. Navigating life without these skills takes hard work and a lot of creativity, and it comes at a cost. Adults with low literacy face poorer health, lower wages, and higher rates of unemployment.

By 2020, two out of three jobs in America will require a college degree, even though nearly half of all adults in the U.S has only a high school degree—or less. Closing this skills gap benefits all of us. We could save our nation \$230 billion in health care costs, and add \$225 billion to our economy in increased tax revenue and productivity. These dividends keep paying for future generations: evidence shows a mom's reading ability is the single best predictor of her kids' success in school—more than race, ethnicity, and family income.

But financial resources for adult education have been on the decline for more than a decade—even as the number of people seeking skills training on the rise. All 50 states and the District of Columbia report lengthy waiting lists for adult learners. At the end of the day, our nation only serves one in 13 adults who need help.

How we help

With a challenge this big, our country can't afford not to act. As members of the National Coalition for Literacy, we work to make sure every adult has the skills they need to find and keep a job, educate their kids, and work toward their piece of the American Dream.

We know fixing the problem means tackling it from the ground up and the top down. So we're educating policymakers about the human, social, and actual costs of low literacy. We're raising much-needed resources to bring more programs to our communities. We're sharing research-based practices about the unique needs of adult learners, and what their potential brings to our nation. And we're working directly with adult learners pursuing the skills they need to boost their chance at future success.

Our biggest week of the year

Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Week, a week designated by Congress, is our chance to share the successes of adult learners, raise awareness for the urgency of adult education, and get more people involved. It's a time to showcase the dedication, hard work, and resilience of adult learners who juggle family, jobs, and the challenges of life—even as they put in the hours to pursue their educational goals.

From September 26 – October 1, we'll be engaging decision makers whose backing we need to strengthen and support adult education. We'll be connecting with adults who need help building their skills to improve their lives, support their families, and get jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. We'll be hosting events—from fun runs to coffee klatches, street fairs to read-ins—to get the word out.

And we're showcasing achievements of adults whose lives have transformed: from participating in their kids' schools for the first time to getting a chance at a better job. Because we know our communities are full of adults are eager to learn and hungry for their fair shot at success.

We need you

Contact us at ncl@ncladvocacy.org to find out more about adult learners and how you can show your support. Every adult should have the skills and training they need to be a productive part of today's workforce. And investing in adult education pays off: when people get the skills and training they need, we all see the returns—in increased productivity, tax revenues, and a stronger economy. When all adults can work and contribute to their full potential, our community and our economy only get stronger.

