



INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)
& ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION (ASE)



Let's get to work.

OACES

Office of Adult & Career Education Services
Rochester City School District

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WHAT IS ADULT EDUCATION?

Adult Education is instruction, often at no cost, for adult students who want to improve their employability, education, or English language skills. Adult Education programs offer basic reading, writing, math, and problem-solving classes, English language lessons, employment preparation and training, Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) preparation, and other basic educational services for adult students. Adult Education includes Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) as well as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL / ESL).

Adult Education programs are for adults 16 years of age and older who are not in school, who have academic skills below the 12th grade level, and/or who need help learning English. The goal of Adult Education is to help adults reach their full potential as workers, family members, and citizens.

Adult Education is funded in part by the federal and state governments, with local and community support. Many programs receive grant funding from private and corporate sources. The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) unit oversees Adult Education programs in New York. ACCES works with public schools, community-based organizations, colleges, correctional facilities, and other agencies to provide Adult Education services.

In Rochester, the Office of Adult and Career Education Services (OACES) is a workforce preparation organization that helps adult students learn the skills they need for success in the workplace and outside the classroom.

With unique focus on the education and employment needs of New York State's adult citizens, several vital interests and goals can be best served through:

- Ensuring that the needs of adults and out-of-school youth are met through efficient and effective access to relevant services, programs, and opportunities offered by the NYSED.
- Encouraging full participation of adults with disabilities.

- Enhancing post-secondary transitions by developing the capacity of individuals to engage in post-secondary education leading to high-quality employment opportunities.
- Promoting workforce investment through unified collaboration with the New York State Department of Labor and State and local Workforce Investment Boards to assure that individuals have access to a “one-stop” source for a full range of services leading to high-quality employment opportunities.
- Supporting individuals experiencing poverty and relying on public services to develop their capacity to earn income and develop assets toward greater economic independence.
- Utilizing a more comprehensive and effective representation for adults in coordinating services and program initiatives with New York State agencies such as the Departments of Labor and Health, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the Office of Children and Family Services, and the State University of New York (SUNY).

There are multiple literacies addressed by Adult Education.

- Survival Literacy



- Oral/Speaking and Written Literacy
- Cultural/Social and Civic Literacy
- Workplace and Employment Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Financial Literacy
- Technological and Digital/Electronic Literacy
- Geographic Literacy
- Media Literacy
- Environmental Literacy
- Scientific Literacy

The importance of each of these literacies in an individual’s life varies based on specific circumstances. They all, however, have the potential to greatly affect the life of every adult and his/her family. Literacy begins within the family and is reinforced,

whether positively or negatively, in subsequent generations. Adult Education seeks to reinforce, promote, and support literacy to help adults reach their full potential as workers, family members, and citizens and in turn continue the cycle of literacy into the future.

Adult Education provides for the Community in numerous ways:

- Adult Education programs benefit businesses, workers, and job seekers. Businesses encourage Adult Education in order to provide and sustain a highly skilled and specialized workforce a workforce with the skills to perform a variety of tasks or workers with “cross-functional” skills. Workers may receive promotions, gain more power in the job market, or become more valuable employees by enrolling in Adult Education programs.
- Adult Education training facilities often house state-of-the-art equipment such as computers and computer-based training equipment.
- Adult Education programs benefit families. Increased literacy and skills translate to a higher earnings potential for the household. Parents’ literacy levels directly correlate to their children’s educational success (according to the National Center for Families Learning).

INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) & ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION (ASE)

Understanding the Student

Teaching adults is challenging and rewarding. Being a successful Adult Basic Education (ABE) & Adult Secondary Education (ASE) teacher is to understand your students and why they are attending your class. Many students enroll in ABE & ASE programs to achieve specific goals. To assist them in this endeavor, teachers should establish a connection with each student and facilitate his/her integration into the classroom environment. Adults differ from children in their orientation to learning, and teachers of adults must recognize these differences and design instructional activities accordingly.

Assessment

Prior to entering the classroom, students are directed to the intake office where they are assessed using a placement test. To determine placement decisions in New York State, ABE/ASE scores and levels are based on the Testing of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test.

The National Reporting System (NRS) requires that local programs assess and place all students into an educational functioning level at intake.

The program places the student according to the lowest functioning level. For example, if a student is at the beginning level in reading and the low intermediate level in numeracy, then the student would be placed in the beginning level. The lowest functioning level also should be used to determine educational gain in subsequent assessments.

Special Concerns of Some Adult Students

As a teacher of adults, you may meet some adult students with special concerns. For example, some adults may doubt their ability to learn simply because they have been away from a formal classroom setting for some time. Also, some adult students have unpleasant memories of school. They may believe that learning situations are hopeless. With the appropriate teaching strategies and environment, you can help them overcome their concerns and build on their strengths.

Classroom Learning Environment

The learning environment includes the physical setting as well as the relationship between student and teacher. Each can directly affect the motivation and behavior of the student. The material you present in any level ABE/ASE class needs to correspond with the students' proficiency levels. If it is too easy or too difficult, the students will become bored or disengaged. Always remember that a welcoming, friendly approach is necessary as it creates a positive learning environment where students feel safe and open to learning.

Immediate and Long Term Goals

Adult students usually have very specific goals which may be short or long term in nature. Most will place immediate focus on the short-term goal(s). Generally the concern is to secure employment and gain the credentials needed for advancement or to pursue post-secondary education. Students who enter an adult literacy program often have had negative experiences, including failures, in traditional educational settings. As a result, they are apprehensive about returning to school and they lack confidence in their ability to succeed. You can help them overcome this anxiety by encouraging them to set realistic goals for both the short and long terms. An initial interview with each student can identify his/her strengths and areas needing improvement as well as the goal(s) that prompted him/her to seek help through ABE/ASE classes. The interview should provide you information about the student's educational history; daily involvement in literacy activities; educational, employment, family, and community involvement goals; and a discussion of work or family commitments that may affect attendance.

Motivating Students

One of the best ways to keep students motivated is to help them feel that they are progressing towards their goals. Develop materials and activities that are relevant to their goals. Make exciting activities! If activities are truly exciting, students will not want to miss class because they know they will be missing the "action". If you help your students develop feelings of respect and friendship for one another, those ties will also draw them back to the class.

Additional Resources

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services

www.acces.nysed.gov/

National Reporting System

www.nrsweb.org

New York State Education Department

www.nysed.gov

Sources

California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project

www.calpro-online.org

Northwest Center for Public Health Practice

www.nwcphp.org

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

www.oces.okstate.edu/



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