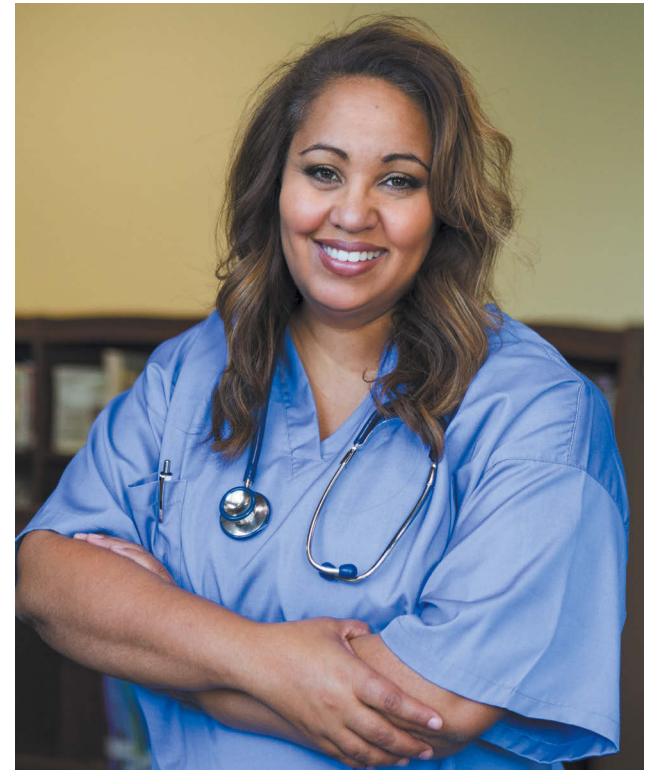


PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Riverside County's future depends on skilled workers.

Where will they come from?



Riverside ABOUT STUDENTS

Regional Consortium for Adult Education
leads the way to better careers and quality of life

Paving the way to better jobs

ABOUT STUDENTS helps adult learners with the skills they need to succeed

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

Designed to help those who are often overlooked, adult education can be a pathway to leaving poverty for a lifetime. Now, it may be more important than ever in helping people get back on their feet, get better jobs and careers, and support California's economy.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Riverside County's adult education providers are uniquely positioned to help build back California's workforce, thanks to reorganization started nearly a decade ago. With Assembly Bills 86 and 104, the state legislature overhauled California's adult education system, creating 71 regional consortia to address specific needs.

Made up of eight local members, the Riverside ABOUT STUDENTS Regional Consortium for Adult Education builds partnerships, bridges and pathways that benefit adult learners, wherever they are and wherever they need to go. Its members include:

Alvord Unified School District
Corona-Norco Unified School District
Jurupa Unified School District
Moreno Valley Unified School District
Riverside Community College District
Riverside County Office of Education
Riverside Unified School District and
Val Verde Unified School District.

"The consortium model brought two systems together for one purpose," says regional director JoDee Slyter of the Consortium. "We figure out ways to do things better. We developed a plan and worked through issues."

When ABOUT STUDENTS formally launched in July 2016, Riverside County had gaps in adult education services for such mainstay programs as English as a second language, basic skills, high school equivalency and career technical education. Funding also had been cut back.

"Our priority was to rebuild those programs and capacity," Slyter says.

The need definitely is still there. Among Riverside County's 2.4 million residents, about 41% of adults age 25 or older have only a high school education or less. One in five residents are foreign-born and may need help learning English. More than 11% of residents live in poverty.

With a flexible schedule designed for busy people, adult education is low- or no-cost, so a person can quickly gain the skills needed for a well-paying job without incurring student loan debt.

"Adult education can be a significant contributor to the economic recovery of California by providing educational and training services to those most in need, by coordinating with partners to address family financial difficulties, and by helping reduce the employment barriers of the students they serve," Slyter says.

ABOUT STUDENTS and its members have several community partners including Riverside Workforce Development Board, the county's Department of Public Social Services and school districts' Parent and Family Engagement Centers.

"We collaborate with local businesses, training providers, and community partners to provide employment opportunities, specialized training, and



needed resources such as scholarships and internship opportunities for adult students in the schools," Slyter says.

The Consortium provides ongoing professional development and training for administrators, teachers, and support staff. To that end, it hosts an annual Professional Development Conference.

"It's one of our crown jewels – an entire day devoted to professional development," Slyter says. "Most of our (Consortium) members send their entire staff. There's something there for everyone."

Finding strength via collaboration, ABOUT STUDENTS has accomplished a lot in its short history, including increases in completion rates and level gains.

"I'm proud of the way all of the members are supported," Slyter says. "I am particularly proud of the members' leadership, the collaborative, trusting relationships, the ingenious ideas, and the passion and dedication which each of the members brings to the Consortium."

Adult education can be a significant contributor to the economic recovery of California by providing educational and training services to those most in need.

JoDee Slyter
Regional Director, Riverside ABOUT STUDENTS Regional Consortium for Adult Education

Meet The Members



It all starts here!

There's not one road to success, and the journey is often not a straight line. To reach their goals, adult learners can choose several pathways that can lead to a new career, a better job, community college or university degrees, or technical certification.

Decide to pursue education

Each individual journey starts with that first step. Adult learners may choose one goal – or multiple goals.

Find an adult school or program

Adult education providers are available at no or low cost with flexible schedules and proven success, close to where students live.

Create a plan to reach goals

Counselors help adult learners assess their needs and goals. Then, a personalized pathway to those goals is created.

Pick a program and pathways

Students can follow multiple pathways at once or stick to one program.

ABE

Adult Basic Education helps students gain the literacy and math skills they need to succeed.

ESL

English as a Second Language helps students become proficient in speaking, reading and understanding English while building needed language skills.

HSD/HSE

High School Diploma or High School Equivalency lets students fill in gaps in their education and earn their graduation certificate.

CTE

Short-term Career and Technical Education prepares students for a wide range of skilled, high-paying and high-demand jobs needed by our economy.

IET

Integrated Education and Training combines English literacy with career training. Students learn English including the vocabulary they need for the jobs they want.

IELCE

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education helps English-language learners at the same time acquire the skills to be more effective parents, workers and citizens.

Make progress

Students can see the progress they've made with their new skills and confidence. They may earn a short-term certificate, diploma or high school equivalency certificate.

Keep going

Adult learners join the workforce and start their new careers. Or they can transition to a community college or 4-year university program.

Success!

Education, degrees and certificates open doors to in-demand careers. Graduates reach their goals!

Better job!

Better pay!

Better life!

With the help of Moreno Valley Community Adult School, Maricela Garcia earned her high school diploma while studying online.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARICELA GARCIA

Distance learning keeps classes in session

Moreno Valley students and teachers move online to continue education

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

Last March, as the COVID-19 virus spread across California, Riverside County ordered all public and private schools — including colleges, universities and the adult education venues — temporarily closed. The schools, including Moreno Valley Community Adult School (MVCAS), made plans to switch their students to online learning.

“First, we were faced with the problem of training teachers so they could deliver online instruction,” says MVCAS Principal Dr. Patricia Bazanos, “and then how we would train our students to receive the instruction.”

Those questions would impact nearly 1,000 MVCAS students who attended the school for ESL, basic education, high school diploma and GED classes or to learn a skill.

Bazanos tapped MVCAS lead teacher Jennifer Griffin to help.

“We gave teachers some basic training on what they needed to know, like digital safety and literacy,” says Griffin. “Then, we identified the main platforms we would use.”

The platforms included Google Classroom and the Zoom videoconferencing app.

By mid-April, MVCAS opened again — virtually — and the teachers helped their students log on and navigate the platforms, Bazanos says.

For MVCAS student Maricela Garcia, 33, of Moreno Valley, succeeding at online learning was critical. The married mother of six needed to earn her high school diploma because Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients like her must either stay in school or obtain a GED or high school diploma to avoid deportation. Garcia says the online learning platforms were easy to use, and whenever she experienced technical issues, she simply messaged her teacher who responded even at night.

“That was a big help,” she says. “And if I needed help with an essay or something, my teacher would go over it step-by-step or have videos showing me how you do it.”

But not all students like Garcia had computers,



Bazanos says.

Fortunately, the Moreno Valley School District distributed Chromebooks to all its K-12 students, she says. And, since most MVCAS students are K-12 parents, the adults were allowed to share the devices with their children.

Since then, MVCAS received \$85,000 in CARES Act funding to order 350 Chromebooks with chargers and 50 hot spots to lend to students who need them, Bazanos says.

“When the devices arrive, we’ll start distributing,” she says.

In January, Garcia graduated from MVCAS with her high school diploma. She says, “I give the teachers at MVCAS credit because, if it wasn’t for them, a lot of us wouldn’t have been able to go to school.”

I give the teachers at MVCAS credit because, if it wasn’t for them, a lot of us wouldn’t have been able to go to school.

Maricela Garcia
New graduate, Moreno Valley

For more information about Moreno Valley Community Adult School programs, visit adulted.mvUSD.net or call 951-571-4790.



Dr. Patricia Bazanos
PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. PATRICIA BAZANOS

Keeping Students Connected During a Pandemic

When schools in Riverside County switched to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some students in adult education **lacked the home computers or internet service needed for their studies**. So last summer, JoDee Slyter, regional director for the Riverside ABOUT STUDENTS Consortium for Adult Education, and her team launched a project to **make a difference**.

The Consortium organized a partnership between the **Riverside Workforce Development Board, Riverside Board of Supervisors and Moreno Valley Unified School District (MVUSD)**. Slyter’s office then surveyed adult schools to see how many devices were needed. Afterwards, the partners collaborated with other local consortiums to apply for **\$1 million in federal CARES Act monies** to pay for devices. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors awarded the funds, Slyter says, and MVUSD acted as fiscal officer to allocate funds.

“What it means for students is that adult schools can purchase laptops and other devices to loan to students, so **students can continue their education**,” she says.

Sharon Lopez overcame her fears and got her high school diploma.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARON LOPEZ

It's never too late to graduate

Getting a diploma or GED opens doors and possibilities

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI



Sharon Lopez has been a loyal volunteer in her community for many years, donating her time to a long list of organizations and causes. "You name it, I've done it," she says.

The Alvord Unified School District has been one of her favorite beneficiaries. "I was offered jobs in the district and told to run for the school board," she says.

But there was one obstacle in the way: She lacked a high school diploma.

"I was always embarrassed by it; it was a secret I didn't want to talk about," says Lopez, 53. "Even my kids were shocked when I said, 'I got my high school diploma.' Mind you, my son graduated from UC Berkeley."

Lopez is acutely aware that she "missed a lot of opportunities by not having that piece of paper. There were many things I could have done, but I had to let them go because I was unwilling to share my secret."

The chance to change that came in 2020, Lopez recalls. "I just so happened to tell one of my friends about it. She said, 'This is an easy fix; c'mon, let's go.' She took me to the Alvord Community Adult School (ACAS) and signed me up."

The school staff "was so supportive and they truly care about the students," Lopez says. "Because the courses were online, I could work them around my life. Now that I have my diploma, the principal, Craig Shiflett, tells me, 'Now you can go to college, it's never too late.' I might take that avenue and still go to work for the district."

Would she recommend the same path for other

middle-aged adults without their diplomas?

"When I started, I thought, 'I haven't been in school in forever, this is impossible,'" she says. "But everyone was so helpful. I want others to know there is hope, that they can do it and will feel better about themselves."

Lopez is not alone. "We've seen a huge increase in students going for their high school diplomas this year," says Victoria Santana, Career Services and Outreach Liaison for ACAS.

It has to do with pandemic-related job loss and workers "stuck in minimum-wage jobs because of a lack of a diploma (or GED)," Santana says.

"Now they're seeing adult education as an opportunity to get a better job or a promotion with that diploma.

While it may seem like a piece of paper, it's actually turning into doors opening for them."

For more information on Alvord Unified School District's adult education programs, visit www.alvordschools.org/adulteducation or call 951-509-5000.

Craig Shiflett

PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG SHIFLETT



Fighting poverty and unemployment

Riverside County ranks as California's fifth largest county and will top 2.5 million residents in 2021, according to census estimates. It's also one of the state's most diverse counties; more than 21% of its population was born in a foreign country. In addition, almost one in five residents lacks a high school diploma or equivalent.

Learning language skills and earning a diploma or certificate can help Riverside County residents get good jobs and lift themselves out of poverty.



Population

- 2010: 2,201,580
- 2020: 2,495,300
- Growth: 13.3%



Unemployment

- December 2019: 3.6%
- December 2020: 9.1%
- Change: 252.8%

During the pandemic, unemployment reached a high of 15.9% in May 2020.

Riverside County residents need adult education

- 11.3% live in poverty
- 18% adults age 25+ lack high school diploma or equivalent
- 41.1% language other than English spoken at home
- \$28,596 annual per capita income (2019)



Population and Unemployment Source:
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Education Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Problem Solved, Vacancies Filled

Riverside Adult School collaborates with the Riverside Unified School District to **smooth its students' path to success** while filling the district's daily part-time job vacancies.

Online job application processes can be challenging for some students. "Some of the students were struggling with getting through it and needed some digital literacy training," says RAS director Rachel Bramlett.

The streamlined arrangement allows for an adult school Teacher and one of the district's Human Resources Technicians to **give appropriate training to students** enrolled in RAS' Custodian and Nutrition Service job-skills classes.

The Teacher and the Human Resources Technician guide them through the step-by-step application process, **making sure it's seamless**. Without that guidance, students would be left to navigate the process on their own, which recent history has shown can be a bumpy road, Bramlett says.

The other barrier for students enrolled in the Custodian and Nutrition Service program was shouldering the cost of licensing and fingerprinting, Bramlett says. The solution: **RAS sourced California Adult Education Program funds to pay for those**.



Rachel Bramlett,
Director of Riverside Adult School
PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHEL BRAMLETT

Job skills go along with earning GED

With work waiting, program prepares students for district positions

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

It had been 18 years since Jason Merriweather left high school without graduating when he decided to do something about it.

"I'd been putting off getting my GED (high school equivalency certificate) for years, and finally I thought, 'I can do better for myself,'" he recalls.

The next stop for Merriweather, then 36, was the Riverside Adult School (RAS), where he signed up for tutoring classes. He aced the GED practice test and, to his great satisfaction, passed the four-phase GED test.

"So many people over the years told me how scary the GED test is, but it's not as hard as they made it out to be," says Merriweather, now 38. "Everybody at the Riverside Adult School was so helpful. If you're a student on the fence about taking the test, my advice is to jump in and totally do it."

It was the graduation ceremony itself that solidified his accomplishment to himself, he says. "I needed that walk across the stage, wearing a cap and gown with everybody watching — everything you miss from not getting your diploma to begin with. Once I did that — even though I was 18 years late — a lot of things fell into place."

One of them was being accepted into RAS's Job Skills program, which offers training for and positions

in nutrition-service and custodial services in the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD). The four-week program is inclusive of both skill sets. After completion, graduates can focus on either one of them. A high school diploma is not required to join the program.

The jobs are substitute positions, but often lead to full-time work, as in Merriweather's case. He's a full-time nutrition-service employee at a RUSD high school.

"That's really big to me," he says. "I've met my goals so far, and getting my GED is where it started."

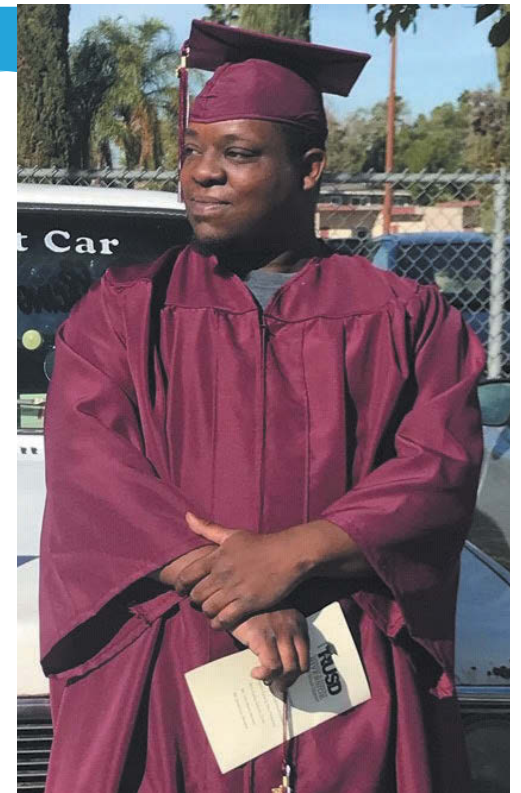
"Jason is a double success story for us," says RAS director Rachel Bramlett. "With his GED, he could one day be promoted to kitchen supervisor or head custodian."

Substitute work is "a good way to get into the school district as a full time employee," Bramlett points out.

"Every day, we have 30 to 40 vacancies in nutrition service and custodial, and our substitutes fill them. Each year, between five and 10 become permanent in either capacity.

"If you need a job and you can give us four weeks, we make it work for you," she says.

For more information on Riverside Unified School District adult education programs, visit <http://ras.riversideunified.org> or call 951-788-7135.



**"I've met
my goals so far,
and getting my
GED is where it
started."**

Jason Merriweather
Graduate, Riverside Adult School

A new language was only the start

Integrated Education Training combines learning English with career technical skills

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI



When Luma Dawood left Iraq for a safer life in the United States, she brought along a master's degree in environmental engineering and a four-year degree in civil engineering.

Despite those towering credentials, she spoke practically no English (as she says, "Yes," "no" and sometimes "hi") and was coming cold to a foreign culture where she "felt like an alien," recalls Dawood, 47. "I'd left everything behind. I felt shy and lonely and had no friends."

Dawood enrolled her children in school, where they soon learned to speak English, "leaving a language gap between them and me," she says. "I wanted to close that gap and decided I should do something for myself as a mom."

She learned about Corona-Norco Adult School (CNAS) and enrolled in its English as a Second Language program. "The people in my classes all had different backgrounds and spoke different languages, but we were all in it together," she says.

Soon, Dawood discovered the school's menu of Career Technical Education classes for English language-learners and began signing up. "I love to study and learn," she explains. "Whenever they offered something, I took it to encourage myself."

Along her CNAS journey — with many certificates in multiple fields — Dawood learned that adult education does much more than prepare students for the workplace, she says. "It's where we learn the systems of life in the U.S. Now I have lots of friends from school. We go out together and I love it. I'm not

shy to talk to anyone.

"I am so grateful for this school; it's like my family," she says. "They helped me become a better mom because now my kids listen to me because I can speak English."

Dawood experienced first-hand CNAS' innovative Integrated Education Training program for three career pathways — Early Childhood Development, Business Office Technology and Trade Skills.

In addition to specialized classes for each pathway, the program involves accelerated English-language classes focusing on the vocabulary and technical terminology specific to a particular pathway. In other words, the language has context.

For instance, the Business Office Technology instructor collaborates closely with the English teacher to help incorporate the specialized vocabulary and terminology the

graduate will find in the workplace for that particular pathway. It's a contextualized "shortcut" for the English-learning student.

"The program's ultimate goal is to get our students into the workforce faster and with more confidence, which benefits our community," says CNAS principal Dr. Thoibi Rublaitus.

For more information on Corona-Norco Adult Education, visit adulthood.cnusd.k12.ca.us or call 951-736-3325.

The program's ultimate goal is to get our students into the workforce faster and with more confidence, which benefits our community.

Dr. Thoibi Rublaitus
Principal, Corona-Norco Adult School

Getting jobs faster

Corona-Norco Adult School is an innovator among the Riverside ABOUT STUDENTS Regional Consortium for Adult Education. For instance, its leading-edge Integrated Education Training (IET) program helps its certificate-holding, English-learning students **join the workforce faster**.

IET is powered by specialized classes concentrated on teaching the technical terminology and vocabulary at the heart of certain skill sets such as business or accounting. **It's a time-saving path to expertise.**

Part of IET is the school's partnership with Express Employment Professionals of Corona. Its specialty is matching job-seekers with companies in need of employees.

In Corona-Norco Adult School's case, says principal Dr. Thoibi Rublaitus, "Express Employment arranges for our students with certificates in our Business Office Technology program **to be given first consideration** when applying for job openings at local businesses.

"The goal is to get our students more jobs, using the skills training we have provided," Rublaitus says. "Getting students on a path to getting jobs faster is a **win-win** for everybody."



Dr. Thoibi Rublaitus
PHOTO COURTESY OF
DR. THOIBI RUBLAITUS

Alicia Torres-Wynne earned her high school diploma and built a foundation for her career in the medical field at Jurupa Adult School.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ALICIA TORRES-WYNNNE

Health Care Career Growth

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care field is projected to grow 15% in the next decade and add 2.4 million new jobs — more than any other occupational group. Some of the fastest growing health care occupations include:



Nursing Assistant

- 2017: 103,345
- 2027: 131,054 (27% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$22.39
- Median annual wages: \$46,578



Home Health Aide

- 2017: 31,461
- 2027: 37,329 (19% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$14.99
- Median annual wages: \$31,175



Physical Therapist Assistant

- 2017: 5,114
- 2027: 7,710 (51% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$38.49
- Median annual wages: \$80,063



Occupational Therapy Assistant

- 2017: 1,955
- 2027: 3,209 (64% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$40.30
- Median annual wages: \$83,832



Health Technologists and Technicians

- 2017: 24,221
- 2027: 33,231 (37% growth)
- Median hourly wages: \$37.56
- Median annual wages: \$78,130

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

'It was the Best Decision I Could Have Made'

Adult School helps student launch medical career

BY ANNE STOKES

Alicia Torres-Wynne graduated high school at 40. Since then, she's been making up for lost time. In the span of five years, she earned her diploma, completed both medical assisting and phlebotomy programs and is in the final stages of becoming a licensed vocational nurse (LVN).

Torres-Wynne left high school her senior year and went on to work a total of 23 years in customer service and accounting jobs — something that paid the bills but wasn't fulfilling. In 2015, she decided it was time to change and went back to school to earn her high school diploma at the Jurupa Adult School.

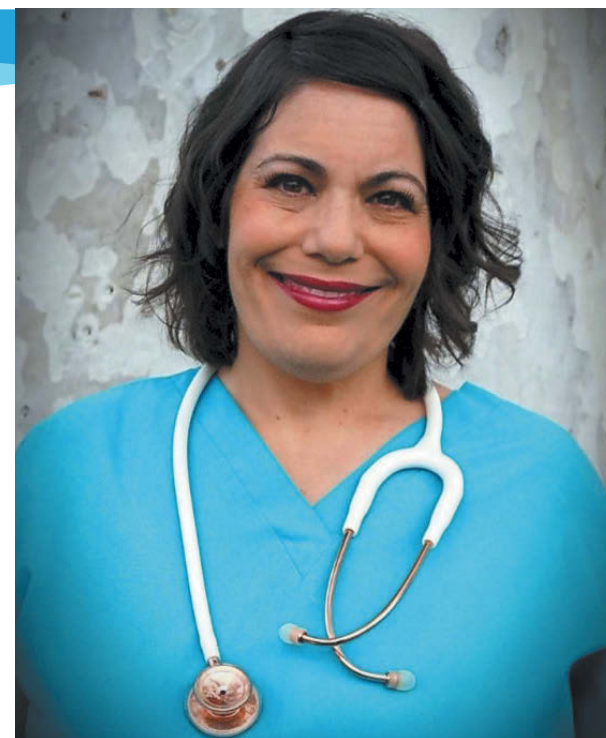
"I had been considering job-growth opportunities which required further education, and not having my high school diploma was always in the back of my mind. Honestly it haunted me for years," she says. "It was the best decision I could have made."

While Torres-Wynne could have advanced her existing career, she opted instead to change it entirely and enrolled in Jurupa's medical assisting program.

"If you're going to do something for the rest of your life, why not do something you're passionate about?" she says.

After she completed the program, she was offered a position at the same hospital she served her externship. According to Dr. Annamarie Montañez, principal of Jurupa Adult School, health care workers are always in demand.

"Prior to the pandemic, we saw with the programs that we have, probably a 15 to 20% increase (in demand). ... We know health care is usually ever-growing," she says. "I would say nine times out of 10, our students do really well and they get hired at their externship site."



For many students, one of the biggest obstacles to entering the medical field is cost. According to Montañez, similar medical assisting programs at private colleges can cost upwards of \$20,000. At Jurupa Adult School, the entire program costs students \$250.

"With that, we include uniforms, we include CPR certifications, we include books, their blood pressure cuff — everything that they're going to need to go out and work," she says. "When I got here to this district and I spoke with the superintendent (Elliott Duchon), he wanted to make it all very accessible to the community."

Even after graduating, Torres-Wynne says her former teachers are still a source of support.

"When I had my self doubts and insecurities, they were always there and very encouraging," she says. "They share your successes with you and they're happy to see that you went further than you initially decided to."

If you're going to do something for the rest of your life, why not do something you're passionate about?

Alicia Torres-Wynne
Graduate, Jurupa Adult School

For more information about Jurupa Adult School programs, visit www.jurupausd.org/schools/adultalternativeducation or call 951-222-7739.



Dr. Annamarie Montañez

Krysti Lopez, shown with her family, passed her high school equivalency exams and is now considering her career and college options.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KRISTI LOPEZ

This Opportunity is Truly Life-Changing

Adult education programs help justice-involved students stay on track

BY ANNE STOKES



After dropping out of high school in the 10th grade, watching her sisters and brother accept their diplomas was a little hard for Krysti Lopez. She didn't have a job and found herself in legal trouble just after she turned 18. On probation, she went to her local day reporting center where she found she could earn her high school equivalency through Desert Edge Adult School.

"I felt like I needed to do it for myself," she says.

Run by the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), Desert Edge Adult School provides adult education programs in the county's jails and probation day reporting centers. Students can earn their high school diploma or equivalency, study English as a second language (ESL) and enroll in career technical education (CTE) programs, offered at some locations.

"We provide teachers, we provide a full program basically including the technology and curriculum and everything that's needed for the program," says Lucie Gonzalez, lead principal for Desert Edge School. "We have programs in the jails and we have programs for people who are on probation. Bottom line is our program is about helping people who want a second chance to complete their education and change their life. That's what we're all about."

And as educational levels rise, recidivism rates fall: A 2018 RAND study found that inmates who participated in educational programs were 28% less likely to re-offend and end up back in jail.

"RCOE partners with the sheriff to provide these robust programs that are shown to have an impact,

significantly lowering recidivism rates versus people who don't complete an education program," Gonzalez says. "It allows them to meet some basic requirements for employment, a huge one being their GED or high school diploma."

Lopez passed the HiSET exam in 2021 and earned her high school equivalency credentials. She's currently exploring her college and career options. She says that while she was initially intimidated about going back to school, it was a great experience for her.

"The programs are there, they're designed to help people who are down and out and don't know what to do, to help them make something of themselves," Lopez says.

"They really enjoy seeing somebody succeed. They congratulate you a lot and kind of push. They want you to come back and they want to see you do well."

They really enjoy seeing somebody succeed.

Krysti Lopez

Desert Edge Adult School student

For more information about Desert Edge Adult School, visit www.rcoe.us or call 951-826-6530.



Lucie Gonzalez

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCIE GONZALEZ

A Hand Up For Job Seekers

For job seekers coming out of the justice system, it's tough to get a foot in the door of today's job market. For people in jail, on probation or parole, the Riverside County Office of Education's Desert Edge Adult School program has partnered with the county probation department and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to provide them with the tools they'll need to get a job and stay out of jail or prison.

"We know that recidivism happens, but there's also research that shows that educational programs ... **definitely have an impact**," says Lucie Gonzalez, alternative education principal.

- Adult basic education (ABE)
- Adult secondary education (ASE) to help prepare for high school diploma GED or HiSET testing
- Workforce preparation to help with soft skills such as resume writing and interviewing
- English as a second language (ESL)
- Career technical education (CTE) at some locations

For more information on the Desert Edge Adult School program, visit www.rcoe.us.

Maria Villatoro improved her computer skills so she could broaden her career possibilities.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIA VILLATORO

A Pathway to Success

Val Verde Adult School, which recently underwent accreditation through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, ensures that students are provided with the education, training, and support that they will need to earn a higher paying job in today's competitive workforce.

"We offer courses that address the needs of our community," says Principal John Parker. "There are no costs or prerequisites to enter our program, and students have the flexibility to enroll at any time during the school year. New students are assessed academically, counseled, and placed in the program that best meets their individualized needs."

- Adult basic education (ABE)
- General education development (GED)
- High school diploma
- Digital and computer literacy
- English as a second language (ESL)
- Citizenship preparation

To enroll in classes, visit <http://adultschool.valverde.edu> or call 951-940-8542.



John Parker

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN PARKER

Opening online possibilities

Digital and computer literacy class helps students navigate today's world

BY ANNE STOKES

Today, computers are part of everyday life. Whether for school, work or fun, knowing how to use them can open new career paths, make any task more efficient and expand learning opportunities for students young and old. For those who need to upgrade their skills, Val Verde Adult School offers digital and computer literacy classes to bring them up to speed.

"It was kind of a basic 101 class that teaches (students) all the foundational skills they need to know about computers," explains John Parker, Val Verde Adult School principal. "The world right now is ever changing. ... As far as employers are concerned, it's an expectation that when they hire employees that they have an idea of how to use software programs."

That's exactly why Maria Villatoro took the class. Currently an instructional aide at Val Verde Elementary School, she's trying to steer her career in a slightly different direction and has recently begun looking into office positions within the school district. While she already had some basic computer skills, she needed more experience operating commonly used software programs.

"I learned how to do spreadsheets, I learned how to do my own Google website, and we created a PowerPoint (presentation)," she says. "We've created a lot of things that help me with what I'm doing right now. It's definitely been very beneficial."



Villatoro isn't the only one benefiting: With her new digital literacy skills, she's able to create fun and engaging assignments for her students as well as help parents manage their children's online distance learning. Her fellow digital literacy students are also able to use their new skills in a variety of jobs and industries.

I think I've personally benefited from it and I've helped others at the same time.

Maria Villatoro
Educator and Val Verde Adult School student

"We all have different benefits," she says. "We're learning how to build websites right now and, to me, building a website is not beneficial. But there are a lot of students in our class who have their own business, so when it came to them, they said, 'We can totally promote (our company)!'"

While Villatoro admits that initially it was intimidating going back to school — even as an educator herself — it's been a very positive experience for her.

"I would definitely encourage anybody who had the opportunity to go back to do so. It's never too late, there's always room to grow and make yourself better," she says. "I'm sure glad I did because I think I've personally benefited from it and I've helped others at the same time. I'm grateful."

For more information on Val Verde Adult School's Digital Computer Literacy class or other courses and programs, visit <http://adultschool.valverde.edu> or call 951-940-8542.

Creating smooth transitions

Adult learners get help they need to advance to college and earn degrees

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

After a difficult childhood, Bradley Bullard of Riverside found himself living on the street as a teenager. But a few years ago, he enrolled at the Riverside Adult School, determined to earn his GED.

Through community partnerships, each adult school houses an educational advisor from Riverside Community College District who focuses exclusively on providing transitional assistance to adult learners. Through this partnership, Bullard met with Riverside City College educational advisor Kristopher Acevedo, as he was completing his coursework at Riverside Adult School.

"He got me plugged in and got me into the program," says Bullard, now 38. "He helped me fill out the applications. Then even after I finished the program, he stayed in contact with me."

"Transitioning to college for any student is difficult," says Paula Barrera Partida, Administrative Assistant for the Office of Adult Education and Community Initiatives at the Riverside Community College District.

"In our area, among the students we attract, (attending college is) a big step," Partida says. "There

are so many challenges that they face, balancing their personal life along with their academic life. So, our advisors help students make that transition. We offer specific assistance from beginning to end."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, advisors traveled to the adult schools to meet with students, says Linda Ju-Ong, Interim Executive Director of Adult Education and Community Initiatives. Now they connect online. "We want to be there to provide the supportive services for the adult school students and to assist them in transitioning to college,"

Ju-Ong says.

Each college's educational advisors help students navigate the complex aspects of the college admissions process such as university and federal student aid applications as well as applying for other resources such as Veteran's education benefits.

After completing RCC's Extended Learning Business Skills Boot Camp certificate in 2019, Bullard met with his RCC educational advisor to enroll in a credit program to complete an associate degree. This Spring,

Our advisors help students make that transition. We offer specific assistance from beginning to end.

Paula Barrera Partida
Office of Adult Education and Community Initiatives, Riverside Community College District



he plans to graduate from RCC with an associate's degree in Social and Behavioral Science as well as language and communications. He dreams of enrolling in a four-year university and getting a degree to work with troubled teens.

Bullard says he credits his advisor to encourage him to take that first step towards his academic future and enroll in a community college. "It was very important," he says. "Without him, I probably wouldn't be graduating. So far, I have a 3.8 GPA, so I'm doing pretty good."

For more information about Riverside Community College District Extended Learning programs and adult education transitional services, visit www.extendedlearning.rccd.edu or call 951-222-8257.



Linda Ju-Ong
PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA JU-ONG

Education Advisors Offer Personalized Guidance

Moving from adult school to enrolling in community college is a major step. But an advisor from a local community college can **help adult learners make the journey to higher education.**

Community colleges in the **Riverside ABOUT STUDENTS Regional Consortium** have educational advisors on staff who work closely with adult schools to assist students with making the transition to community college.

The advisors do that by giving students **one-on-one, personalized guidance** to help tackle any obstacles that would otherwise keep students from enrolling in or succeeding in community college.

Education advisors also keep regular office hours, even online. So students can log on and **schedule an appointment** to speak with an advisor via Zoom videoconferencing.

In addition, education advisors:

- Assist with filling out college applications and federal financial aid forms
- Provide career guidance
- Advise students on which community college classes to take
- Offer information about additional resources such as V.A. education benefits
- Lead campus tours
- Organize college preparation workshops

Where learning never stops

Adult education brings learning to students who need it most.

Support and protect this valuable resource in Riverside County!

The ABOUT STUDENTS Regional Consortium for Adult Education serves the western region of Riverside County. Members and partners of the Consortium provide adult education opportunities to the cities and communities of Corona, Eastvale, Highgrove, Home Gardens, Jurupa Valley, Mead Valley, Moreno Valley, Norco and Riverside.

<https://riversideregionadulthood.org>

www.focusforwardriverside.com



ESL = English as a Second Language

CTE = Career & Technical Education

HSD = High School Diploma

HSE = High School Equivalency

ABE = Adult Basic Education

School	ESL	CTE	HSD/ HSE	ABE
1 Alvord Community Adult School 10368 Campbell Ave. Room 13 Riverside, CA 92503 www.alvordschools.org/adulthoodeducation	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 Corona-Norco Adult School 300 S. Buena Vista Ave. Corona, CA 92882 www.adulthood.cnusd.k12.ca.us	✓	✓	✓	✓
3 Jurupa Adult School 4041 Pacific Ave. Riverside, CA 92509 https://jurupausd.org/schools/adulthoodalternativeeducation	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 Moreno Valley Community Adult School 13350 Indian St. Moreno Valley, CA 92553 www.adulthood.mvusd.net	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 Moreno Valley College 16130 Lasselle St. Moreno Valley, CA 92551 951-571-6100 www.mvc.edu	✓	✓		
6 Norco College 2001 Third St. Norco, CA 92860 951-372-7000 www.norco.edu	✓	✓		
7 Riverside City College 4800 Magnolia Ave. Riverside, CA 92506 951-222-8000 www.rcc.net	✓	✓		
8 Desert Edge Adult School 3939 Thirteenth St. Riverside, CA 92501 www.rcoe.us	✓	✓	✓	✓
9 Riverside Adult School 6735 Magnolia Ave. Riverside, CA 92506 951-788-7185 http://ras.riversideunified.org/	✓	✓	✓	✓
10 Val Verde Adult School 972 Morgan St. Perris, CA 92571 951-788-7135 www.adulthood.valverde.edu	✓	✓	✓	✓