

QuickStudy

A quarterly briefing from the Maine Adult Education Association

Winter/Spring 2003

*Dear Readers,
Economic cycles may come and go. Still the need for educational opportunities remains. In Maine, many of our citizens and our economy are held hostage to low-paying jobs in low-tech industries. The Maine Adult Education Association is working to change that.*

In January, MAEA signed an historic agreement with the Maine Technical College System, and we are currently drafting one with University of Maine's University College. Our organizations are pledging to work together to encourage and prepare Maine's adult learners for higher education. The idea is to open lines of communication so more students who need counseling, college preparatory and remedial skills will get the help they need through Maine's Adult Education programs. In turn, Maine's colleges will enroll students who are better equipped to succeed. That simple win-win strategy brings me back to the point of this letter. Now more than ever, we need to support and promote the opportunities the Maine Adult Education system offers.

Rob Wood



President, Maine Adult Education Association

7 reasons Maine Adult Education is essential to Maine's future

State funding for education is tighter than ever. As legislators continue discussions about the new state budget, QuickStudy explores the value of Maine Adult Education in communities throughout Maine.

1. Value for the Taxpayer's Dollar*

"When it comes to funding, Maine Adult Education programs provide excellent value for the taxpayer's dollar," said Rob Wood, President of the Maine Adult Education Association (MAEA). Wood pointed out state funding, in fact, has remained near 1992 levels, while many of the state's adult education programs have actually expanded their services to meet local educational needs. Now, as the need increases for vocational and workplace training available through adult education, Wood said there is considerable interest among the legislature to bring adult education funding levels in line with other programs in the state.

2. Dislocated Workers

From 2002 to early 2003, adult education programs in Maine provided counseling, basic education and job training to nearly 2,457 dislocated workers from 63 different companies. That represents more than one-third of all workers laid off by Maine companies in 2002, according to the Maine Department of Labor. "It turns out these programs work very well when administered by adult education," said Cathy Newell, MAEA Execu-

tive Director, who recently completed a statewide survey of adult education programs serving Maine's dislocated workers. "We are able to be up and running with the services the workers need in a matter of days, and we usually offer programs right in the towns where these people live or work."

3. College Transition

A key role of adult education is helping adult learners make the transition to technical colleges, universities and other post-secondary programs. In 2002, nearly 1,800 adult education students were enrolled in college transition courses. Another 16,804 participated in high school completion courses that would enable them to enroll in post-secondary courses. In January 2003, MAEA signed a collaborative agreement

with the Maine Technical College System to provide pre-college counseling and preparatory and remedial instruction to students bound for the state's technical colleges. A similar agreement is being negotiated with the University of Maine's University College.

4. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Maine Adult Education teachers have been in the forefront working with immigrants as they strive to become contributing members of the Maine community. In 2002 and 2003, Maine Adult Education programs enrolled approximately 4,000 students statewide. In Lewiston, the growing Somali immigrant population that has been in the



Maine Adult Education programs offering job counseling, college transition and workplace training have been key players as communities have struggled to help displaced workers.



MAINE Adult Education Association

P.O. Box 187
Greenwood, ME 04255
(207) 875-2722
www.maineadulted.org



ESOL students in Lewiston. ESOL programs offered throughout the Maine Adult Education system give new residents survival skills and promote community understanding.

news lately represents only one of 25 different cultures represented in the program's ESOL classes. "In just two years, our ESOL enrollment has grown from 72 in 2001 to 407 in 2002," said Lewiston Adult Education Director Anne Niemiec. "Beyond helping these new residents to develop the communication skills they need, our programs strive to create a real sense of community and intercultural understanding."

5. Adult and Family Literacy

In Maine, more than 15% of all residents demonstrate literacy skills at the lowest level of proficiency, according to the National Adult Literacy Survey. In 2002, Maine Adult Education programs worked with 11,267 Mainers and their families to promote literacy on four levels: adult literacy, pre-literacy for young children, parent education, and intergenerational activities. "We have a class in a low-income housing devel-

opment we fear we will have to cancel next year," said Diana McCain, director, Merrymeeting Regional Adult Education. "The students' literacy skills are low and they are among those most in need."

6. Accessibility

With 126 programs in 200 communities, Maine Adult Education is the most accessible educational resource available to adults in the state. In 2002, more than 1 in every 10 adults in Maine enrolled in a Maine Adult Education course last year — 125,518 Mainers in all.

7. Affordability

Adult education helps Maine citizens overcome the financial barriers

Maine Adult Education 2002 Enrollment

Literacy	11,267 (subsidized)
H.S. Completion	16,804 (subsidized)
College Transition	1,754 (subsidized)
Vocational	25,855 (subsidized)
Enrichment	57,568 (self-sustaining)
Recreation/Community	12,270 (self-sustaining)
Total Enrollment	125,518

that prevent them from aspiring to higher education. Courses cost an average of \$35. Many programs are free or very low-cost, paid for by employers and through educational grants and state subsidies. "It's very important that we are able to offer low-income students the opportunity to participate for a reduced fee — or no fee — if they are seeking employment or post-secondary education," said Maggie Griffin,

Co-Director of Boothbay Region Adult Education.

****Please note: Literacy, High School Completion, Vocational and Academic Transition receive state subsidies and support from local taxpayers and the federal government. Enrichment, recreation and community courses are entirely self-supporting and are funded through registration fees.***



"For too many of our high school graduates or mid-career workers, post-secondary education is out of reach. The Maine Technical Colleges and Maine Adult Education Association have signed over 60 agreements partnering adult education programs with technical colleges. This is a step in better preparing Maine's next generation of workers. . . A top goal of my administration is to bring college within reach of those who have not traditionally gone on. To do so we must offer them an affordable and accessible option."

— Budget Address by Maine Governor
John Baldacci, February 5, 2003