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. Everyday activities—from getting a job to finding an apartment to enrolling your child at school—are infinitely more challenging, and come at a high cost. The fact is, adults with low literacy face poorer health, lower wages, and higher rates of unemployment. What’s more, the challenge is growing steeper every year. 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.

The benefits of closing this skills gap are clear—not just for the individuals involved, but for all of us. Research shows that fixing the problem 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: kids do better when their parents have the skills to get jobs that sustain their families and make ends meet. And 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.

Despite what our country stands to gain, financial resources for adult education have been on the decline for more than a decade. With state and federal funds flat—or falling—and the number of people seeking skills training on the rise, demand for adult education far outstrips supply. 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. We, as members of the National Coalition for Literacy, are the boots on the ground, the teachers in in the classroom, the researchers, community leaders, and the voices on Capitol Hill. Together, 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 how we can all benefit when people have the skills to participate in the 21st century workforce. And we’re working directly with adult learners as they pursue the skills they need to boost their self-sufficiency and chance at future success.

**Our biggest week of the year**

Our work is 365 days a year. Celebrating 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 2 - 29, 2018, we’ll be connecting with decision makers whose backing we need to strengthen and support adult education. We’re meeting face-to-face, inviting them into our classrooms, and sharing the facts about what adult learners’ success means to our communities.

We’ll be connecting with adults who need help building their skills and getting credentials to improve their lives, support their families, and get jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. We’re hosting events in the community—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. We’re sharing the success stories of people in our community eager to learn and hungry for their fair shot at success.

**We need you**

Too many adults in across our nation lack the skills they need to get and keep a job, support their families, and succeed in life. You can be a part of the solution, and we have lots of ways—big and small—that you can help. Contact us to learn more about how you can be a part of changing lives in our community. Together, we can help put more people on the path to self-sufficiency and success.