



MCAEL

Montgomery Coalition for

Adult English Literacy

MCAEL FACT SHEET: WE ALL BENEFIT FROM AN ENGLISH LITERATE COMMUNITY

Economic Development and Self-Sufficiency

In Montgomery County, one out of three workers is an immigrant. According to the Urban Institute, the average hourly wage of immigrant workers who speak English "well" or "very well" is much higher than that of immigrant workers with limited English skills. In fact, a fluent English-speaking immigrant earns nearly double that of a non-English speaking worker. (Urban Institute 2007) That equates to higher spending and taxes paid – which benefits us all.

Every dollar invested in adult education yields a return of \$3.15 to Maryland economy in increased earnings within 18 months (MAACCE).

Learners achieve significant annual wage gains within 18 months after program exit, ranging from \$1,817 to \$2,579, an 18 to 25 percent gain for minimum wage workers. (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce's *Educational Attainment in the United States*)

Literacy has a profound impact on family income. Forty three percent of adults at the lowest level of literacy proficiency live in poverty compared with four percent of adults with strong literacy skills. (The State of Literacy in America, 1998)

A rise in of 1% in literacy scores leads to a 2.5% rise in labor productivity and a 1.5% rise in G DP per person. (The Economist, August 28, 2004)

Children Ready to Learn

A parent's literacy level is one of the most significant predictors of a child's future literacy ability. Poor school achievement and dropping out before completing school are commonplace among children of illiterate parents. (REACH Educational Foundation, 2003)

Illiterate adult parents stand a much greater chance of parenting children who are less likely to succeed in school than those with literate parents. These children are more likely to be "Left Behind" no matter what we do in our schools, unless we help the parents to improve their own literacy and English language skills. Adults currently enrolled in Maryland adult education programs have about 22,000 school-age children (Source: 2007 Literacy Works Report).

There are close to 15,000 ESOL students in MCPS – more than 10% of the student population (MCPS website). Based on national averages, four out of five will have parents who are limited English proficient. Beyond this population, over half of foreign-born children who speak English "very well" have only limited English proficient parents (Urban Institute).

Healthy Communities

Annual health care costs in the U.S. are four times higher for individuals with low literacy skills than they are for individuals with high level literacy skills. (ProLiteracy Worldwide)

The health care industry estimates \$73 billion per year of unnecessary health care expenses attributable to poor literacy. (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Statistics, 2004)

In one U.S. study, having a ninth-grade reading level or less appeared to double the risk of mortality among elderly people over a five-year period. (National Institute on Aging, 2006)

When family members or untrained interpreters are used to assist with communication, an average of 31 translation errors are made per health care visit. (American Medical Association, 2005)

Good Citizens, Connected Communities

A 2003 Urban Institute study found that 60 percent of legal immigrants who were eligible to become citizens but had not done so were Limited English Proficient (LEP).

An estimated 30 million adults, or 14%, have "below basic" literacy skills. This means they cannot perform basic literacy functions like read a map, fill out a job application, or calculate the total cost from a purchase order. Of this 30 million, 11 million are considered "not literate in English" (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2002)

“The shortage of high-quality ESL programs poses one of the most difficult challenges for foundations interested in improving the economic and social wellbeing of communities with sizable or growing newcomer populations. Funders who have prioritized broader goals such as better health and education outcomes may want to consider addressing ESL needs as part of their grantmaking strategy. (Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, 2008)