

# Teachers—Adult Literacy and Remedial and Self-Enrichment Education

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## Significant Points

- Many adult literacy and remedial and self-enrichment teachers work part time and receive no benefits; unpaid volunteers also teach these subjects.
- Opportunities for teachers of English as a second language are expected to be very good, due to the expected increase in the number of residents with limited English skills who seek classes.
- Demand for self-enrichment courses is expected to rise with growing numbers of people who embrace lifelong learning and of retirees who have more free time to take classes.

## Nature of the Work

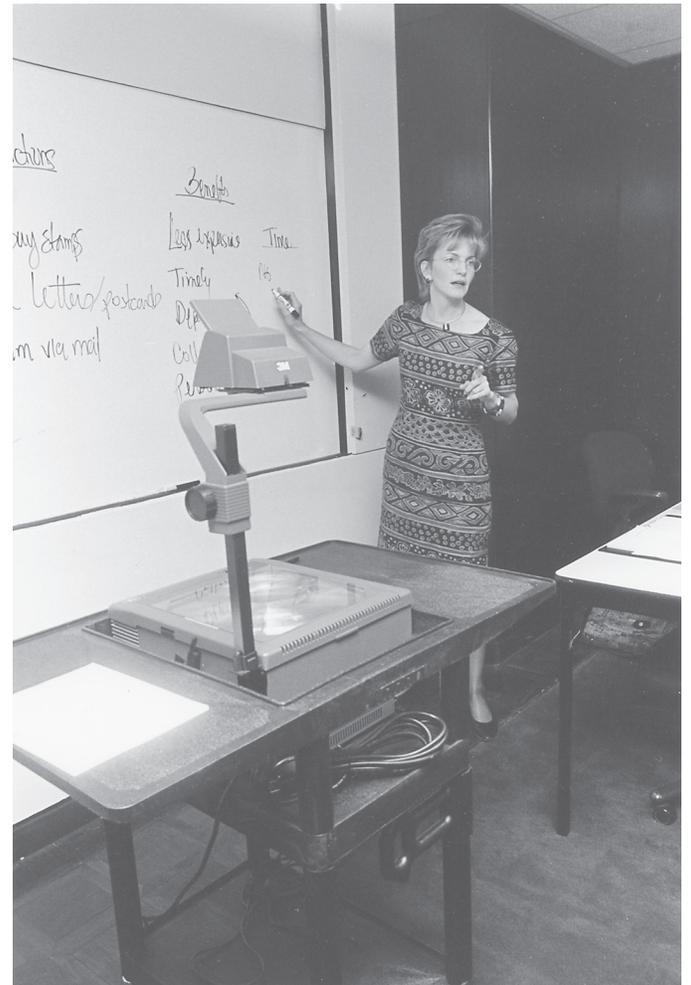
*Self-enrichment teachers* teach courses that students take for pleasure or personal enrichment; these classes are not usually intended to lead to a particular degree or vocation. Self-enrichment teachers may instruct children or adults in a wide variety of areas, such as cooking, dancing, creative writing, photography, or personal finance. In contrast, *adult literacy and remedial education teachers* provide adults and out-of-school youths with the education they need to read, write, and speak English and to perform elementary mathematical calculations—basic skills that equip them to solve problems well enough to become active participants in our society, to hold a job, and to further their education. The instruction provided by these teachers can be divided into three principle categories: *remedial or adult basic education (ABE)*, which is geared toward adults whose skills are either at or below an eighth-grade level; *adult secondary education (ASE)*, which is geared towards students who wish to obtain their General Educational Development (GED) certificate or other high school equivalency credential; and *English literacy*, which provides instruction for adults with limited proficiency in English. Traditionally, the students in adult literacy and remedial (basic) education classes were made up primarily of those who did not graduate high school or who passed through school without the knowledge needed to meet their educational goals or to participate fully in today's high-skill society. Increasingly, however, students in these classes are immigrants or other people whose native language is not English. Educators who work with adult English-language learners are usually called *teachers of English as a second language (ESL)* or *teachers of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL)*.

Self-enrichment teachers, due to the wide range of classes and subjects they teach, may have styles and methods of instruction that differ greatly. The majority of self-enrichment classes are relatively informal and nonintensive in terms of instructional demands. Some classes, such as pottery or sewing, may be largely hands-on, requiring students to practice doing things themselves in order to learn. In that case, teachers may demonstrate methods or techniques for their class and subsequently supervise students' progress as they attempt to carry out the same or similar tasks or actions. Other classes, such as those involving financial planning or religion and spirituality, may

be somewhat more academic in nature. Teachers of these classes are likely to rely more heavily on lectures and group discussions as methods of instruction. Classes offered through religious institutions, such as marriage preparation or classes in religion for children, may also be taught by self-enrichment teachers.

Many of the classes that self-enrichment educators teach are shorter in duration than classes taken for academic credit; some finish in 1 or 2 days to several weeks. These brief classes tend to be introductory in nature and generally focus on only one topic—for example, a cooking class that teaches students how to make bread. Some self-enrichment classes introduce children and youths to activities such as piano or drama, and may be designed to last anywhere from 1 week to several months. These and other self-enrichment classes may be scheduled to occur after school or during school vacations.

Remedial education teachers, more commonly called adult basic education teachers, teach basic academic courses in mathematics, languages, history, reading, writing, science, and other areas, using instructional methods geared toward adult learning. They teach these subjects to students 16 years of age and older who demonstrate the need to increase their skills in one or more of the subject areas mentioned. Classes are taught to appeal to a variety of learning styles and usually include large-group, small-group, and one-on-one instruction. Because the students often are at different proficiency levels for different



English literacy teachers often use real-life situations to promote learning.

subjects, adult basic education teachers must make individual assessments of each student's abilities beforehand. In many programs, the assessment is used to develop an individualized education plan for each student. Teachers are required to evaluate students periodically to determine their progress and potential for advancement to the next level.

Teachers in remedial or adult basic education may have to assist students in acquiring effective study skills and the self-confidence they need to reenter an academic environment. Teachers also may encounter students with a learning or physical disability that requires additional expertise. Teachers should possess an understanding of how to help these students achieve their goals, but they also may need to have the knowledge to detect challenges their students may have and provide them with access to a broader system of additional services that are required to address their challenges.

For students who wish to get a GED credential in order to get a job or qualify for postsecondary education, adult secondary education or GED teachers provide help in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the test. The GED tests students in subject areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, while at the same time measuring students' communication, information-processing, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. The emphasis in class is on acquiring the knowledge needed to pass the GED test, as well as preparing students for success in further educational endeavors.

ESOL teachers help adults to speak, listen, read, and write in English, often in the context of real-life situations to promote learning. More advanced students may concentrate on writing and conversational skills or focus on learning more academic or job-related communication skills. ESOL teachers teach adults who possess a wide range of cultures and abilities and who speak a variety of languages. Some of their students have a college degree and many advance quickly through the program owing to a variety of factors, such as their age, previous language experience, educational background, and native language. Others may need additional time due to these same factors. Because the teacher and students often do not share a common language, creativity is an important part of fostering communication in the classroom and achieving learning goals.

All adult literacy, remedial, and self-enrichment teachers must prepare lessons beforehand, do any related paperwork, and stay current in their fields. Attendance for students is mostly voluntary and course work is rarely graded. Many teachers also must learn the latest uses for computers in the classroom, as computers are increasingly being used to supplement instruction in basic skills and in teaching ESOL.

### **Working Conditions**

A large number of adult literacy and remedial and self-enrichment education teachers work part time. Some have several part-time teaching assignments or work full time in addition to their part-time teaching job. Classes for adults are held on days and at times that best accommodate students who may have a job or family responsibilities. Similarly, self-enrichment classes for children are usually held after school or during school vacation periods.

Because many of these teachers work with adult students, they do not encounter some of the behavioral or social problems sometimes found with younger students. Adults attend by choice, are highly motivated, and bring years of experience to the classroom—attributes that can make teaching these students rewarding and satisfying. Self-enrichment teachers must have a

great deal of patience, particularly when working with young children.

### **Employment**

Teachers of adult literacy, remedial, and self-enrichment education held about 280,000 jobs in 2002. About 1 in 5 was self-employed. Many additional teachers worked as unpaid volunteers.

Nearly three-quarters, or 200,000, of the jobs were held by self-enrichment teachers. The largest numbers of these workers were employed by public and private educational institutions, religious organizations, and providers of social assistance and amusement and recreation services.

Adult literacy, basic education, and GED teachers and instructors held about 80,000 jobs. Many of the jobs are federally funded, with additional funds coming from State and local governments. The education industry employs the majority of these teachers, who work in adult learning centers, libraries, or community colleges. Others work for social service organizations such as job-training or residential care facilities. Still others work for State and local governments, providing basic education at juvenile detention and corrections institutions, among other places.

### **Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement**

The main qualification for self-enrichment teachers is expertise in their subject area; however, requirements may vary greatly with both the type of class taught and the place of employment. In some cases, a portfolio of one's work may be required. For example, to secure a job teaching a photography course, an applicant would need to show examples of previous work. Special certification may be required to teach some subjects, such as a Red Cross water safety instructor certificate to teach swimming. Some self-enrichment teachers are trained educators or other professionals who teach enrichment classes in their spare time. In some disciplines, such as art or music, specific teacher training programs are available. Prospective dance teachers, for example, may complete programs that prepare them to instruct any number of types of dance—from ballroom dancing to ballet. Self-enrichment teachers also should have good speaking skills and a talent for making the subject interesting. Patience and the ability to explain and instruct students at a basic level are important as well, particularly when one is working with children.

Requirements for teaching adult literacy and basic and secondary education vary by State and by program. Federally funded programs run by State and local governments require high accountability and student achievement standards. Those programs run by religious, community, or volunteer organizations, rather than State-run, federally funded programs, generally develop standards based on their own needs and organizational goals. Most State and local governments and educational institutions require that adult teachers have at least a bachelor's degree and, preferably, a master's degree. Some—especially school districts that hire adult education teachers—require an elementary or secondary school teaching certificate. A few have begun requiring a special certificate in ESOL or adult education. Teaching experience, especially with adults, also is preferred or required. Volunteers usually do not need a bachelor's degree, but often must attend a training program before they are allowed to work with students.

Most programs recommend that adult literacy and basic and secondary education teachers take classes or workshops on teach-

ing adults, using technology to teach, working with learners from a variety of cultures, and teaching adults with learning disabilities. ESOL teachers also should have courses or training in second-language acquisition theory and linguistics. In addition, knowledge of the citizenship and naturalization process may be useful. Knowledge of a second language is not necessary to teach ESOL students, but can be helpful in understanding the students' perspectives. GED teachers should know what is required to pass the GED and be able to instruct students in the subject matter. Training for literacy volunteers usually consists of instruction on effective teaching practices, needs assessment, lesson planning, the selection of appropriate instructional materials, characteristics of adult learners, and cross-cultural awareness.

Adult education and literacy teachers must have the ability to work with a variety of cultures, languages, and educational and economic backgrounds. They must be understanding and respectful of their students' circumstances and be familiar with their concerns. All teachers, both paid and volunteer, should be able to communicate well and motivate their students.

Professional development among adult education and literacy teachers varies widely. Both part-time and full-time teachers are expected to participate in ongoing professional development activities in order to keep current on new developments in the field and to enhance skills already acquired. Each State's professional development system reflects the unique needs and organizational structure of that State. Attendance by teachers at professional development workshops and other activities is often outlined in State or local policy. Some teachers are able to access professional development activities through alternative delivery systems such as the Internet or distance learning.

Opportunities for advancement in these professions, particularly for adult education and literacy teachers, again vary from State to State and program to program. Some part-time teachers are able to move into full-time teaching positions or program administrator positions, such as coordinator or director, when such vacancies occur. Others may decide to use their classroom experience to move into policy work at a nonprofit organization or with the local, State, or Federal government or to perform research. Self-enrichment teachers also may advance to administrative positions or may even go on to start their own school or program. Experienced self-enrichment teachers may mentor new instructors and volunteers.

### **Job Outlook**

Opportunities for jobs as adult literacy, remedial, and self-enrichment education teachers are expected to be favorable. Employment is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2012, and a large number of job openings is expected, due to the need to replace people who leave the occupation or retire.

Self-enrichment education teachers account for the largest proportion of jobs in these occupations. The need for self-enrichment teachers is expected to grow as more people embrace lifelong learning and as the baby boomers begin to retire and have more time to take classes. Subjects that are not easily researched on the Internet and those that provide hands-on experiences, such as cooking, crafts, and the arts, will be in greater demand. Also, classes on spirituality and self-improvement are expected to be popular.

As employers increasingly require a more literate workforce, workers' demand for adult literacy, basic education, and sec-

ondary education classes is expected to grow. Significant employment growth is anticipated especially for ESOL teachers, who will be needed by the increasing number of immigrants and other residents living in this country who need to learn, or enhance their skills in, English. In addition, a greater proportion of these groups is expected to take ESOL classes. Demand for ESOL teachers will be greatest in States such as California, Florida, Texas, and New York, due to their large populations of residents who have limited English skills. However, parts of the Midwest and Plains States have begun to attract large numbers of immigrants, making for especially good opportunities in those areas as well.

The demand for adult literacy and basic and secondary education often fluctuates with the economy. When the economy is good and workers are hard to find, employers relax their standards and hire workers without a degree or GED or those with limited proficiency in English. As the economy softens, more students find that they need additional education to get a job. However, adult education classes often are subject to changes in funding levels, which can cause the number of teaching jobs to fluctuate from year to year. In addition, factors such as immigration policies and the relative prosperity of the United States compared with other countries may have an impact on the number of immigrants entering this country and, consequently, on the demand for ESOL teachers.

### **Earnings**

Median hourly earnings of self-enrichment teachers were \$14.09 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$9.86 and \$19.69. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$7.37, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$26.49. Self-enrichment teachers are generally paid by the hour or for each class that they teach.

Median hourly earnings of adult literacy, remedial education, and GED teachers and instructors were \$17.50 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$13.21 and \$24.00. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$10.08, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$34.30. Part-time adult literacy and remedial education and GED instructors are usually paid by the hour or for each class that they teach, and receive few benefits or none at all. Full-time teachers are generally paid a salary and receive health insurance and other benefits if they work for a school system or government.

### **Related Occupations**

The work of adult literacy, remedial, and self-enrichment teachers is closely related to that of other types of teachers, especially preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and secondary school teachers. In addition, adult literacy and basic and secondary education teachers require a wide variety of skills and aptitudes. Not only must they be able to teach and motivate students (including, at times, those with learning disabilities), but they also must often take on roles as advisers and mentors. Workers in other occupations that require these aptitudes include special-education teachers, counselors, and social workers. Self-enrichment teachers teach a wide variety of subjects that may be related to the work done by those in many other occupations, such as dancers and choreographers; artists and related workers; musicians, singers, and related workers; recreation and fitness workers; and athletes, coaches, umpires, and related workers.

### **Sources of Additional Information**

Information on adult literacy, basic and secondary education programs, and teacher certification requirements is available from State departments of education, local school districts, and literacy resource centers. Information also may be obtained through local religious and charitable organizations.

For information on adult education and family literacy programs, contact

► The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 4090 MES, 400 Maryland Ave. SW., Washington, DC 20202. Internet: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE>

For information on teaching English as a second language, contact

► The National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 4646 40th St. NW., Washington, DC 20016. Internet: <http://www.cal.org/nclle>