



YOUR PATHWAY
— TO —

ADULT EDUCATION

Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective
helps people pursue more well-paid careers,
higher education and brighter possibilities.

How can they help you?

Northern Alameda
Adult Education
Collective



COMING TOGETHER

TO GET AHEAD

Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective creates more opportunities for success

BY MATT JOCKS



Students take many paths to find their way into the adult education system. The goal for Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective is to make sure that, once those learners get in the door, the road map is clear.

Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective (NAC) is one of California's regional adult education consortia, formed after funding was made available in 2013 to restructure adult education statewide. The collective includes six school districts and four community colleges, and offers an array of services. If students are seeking literacy skills, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, a high school diploma or equivalence or career training, NAC has the right program.

Community colleges and adult schools existed before NAC, but navigating those institutions alone could be discouraging.

"There was no comprehensive approach," says Joy Chua, Principal at Alameda Adult School. "They might go to one institution and get sent to another. Even within a community college, sometimes they would be sent to different places — for online registration or to see a counselor or for assessment and orientation."

With coordination comes a system that is more user-friendly, easily accessible, adaptable to individual needs and involves less duplication of services.

"Take ESL, for example," Chua says, "all of the members offer it. But, in the adult schools, we will serve more beginning-level students. The community colleges will generally serve more ESL students with higher-level English skills."

Why does that matter?

"We want to make sure students are enrolled in the program that best fits their interests and needs," she says. "Are they eligible for financial aid? If they are not, is an adult school or nonprofit a good option?"

Getting each student on the right path is the goal of NAC, and there are individuals devoted to doing just that. Transition liaisons can help students navigate the enrollment process, move from one level to the next and, in some cases, participate in multiple programs at once.

The benefits of adult education extend far beyond the walls of the school and the lives of individual students — adult education also fills the need for a highly trained workforce.

"The biggest gap in the economy is not for Ph.D.s, not even for those with bachelor's degrees. It's for people with good technical skills," says Tom Reid, Principal at Berkeley Adult School. "I'm valuable if I can transition students from my programs to colleges or careers, well-prepared to succeed in those environments."

And it goes beyond even that, having a generational impact.

"The biggest predictor of education success in children is the education level of their parents," Reid says. "If we can advance that level, we are making a significant contribution. It's also fantastic modeling for children to see the value of education."

"The biggest predictor of education success in children is the education level of their parents."

TOM REID
Principal, Berkeley Adult School

Low price tag, high expectations

Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective sees adult learners as students, not customers.

NAC offers FREE access to adult education opportunities for most programs (and minimal costs for others). While other programs have glossy ads that appear to offer a quick way into a career, those programs can come with price tags anywhere between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

"There are for-profit colleges that really prey on those who may not know better," says Joy Chua, Principal of Alameda Adult School. "You may take a culinary course that will result in a job paying \$10 an hour and leaves you with thousands of dollars in debt. Those colleges make it *easy* to get in and *easy* to slide into debt."

NAC offers transition liaisons who can help tailor approaches to the individual student and allow easy transitions from one program to another.

"We just do our job," Chua says, "which is looking out for the student!"

ADULT EDUCATION: TAKE THE FIRST STEP TO SUCCESS

Through Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective, adult schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations (CBO) are working together to expand and improve adult education in northern Alameda County.

BY MATT JOCKS



► WHERE TO START

Everyone has different needs and goals. Those looking to take the first step in charting their path can start at **NACAE.NET**. There, students can find the programs available in Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda and Piedmont to create their own path to success.



► ADULT SCHOOLS ONLY

Adult basic education, high school diploma/equivalent and citizenship courses

Without a high school diploma, adults may have trouble finding a job that will support a family. By working on basic skills, adults can earn a diploma or equivalent certificate to begin building a bridge to their future. Students can also take citizenship classes.

► BOTH ADULT SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

English as a Second Language (ESL) courses

English as a Second Language courses help adults gain the communication skills they need to be successful students, employees and community members.

Career Technical Education

Students can gain the hands-on skills and experience that will make them more employable in a wide range of fields, including health care and construction.

► COMMUNITY COLLEGES ONLY

Associate Degree

With the academic skills learned, students can complete a two-year associate degree that can lead to a higher-paying career, paid apprenticeship or further education.



SUCCESS!

Students can apply the knowledge and skills obtained from adult schools and community colleges to progress in their career goals or advance to four-year institutions.



HELPFUL HINT

Community-based organizations (CBO) are another entry point for adults to get a start. Many of the organizations collaborate with NAC to provide support services for adult learners to succeed. Visit nacae.net to see the list of CBOs.

LEARNING TOGETHER

Fernanda was able to learn English and participate in her children's schooling through the Family Literacy Program

BY THEA MARIE ROOD



"I decided that my children would not be my interpreters, that they would not be ashamed to introduce me to their friends."

FERNANDA SILVA
Family Literacy Program student,
Alameda Adult School

Fernanda Silva came to the U.S. from Brazil in 2015 along with her husband, two children and a baby on the way.

Although her husband Adriano spoke fluent English, she and her two children, Amanda and Gabriel, spoke and understood only Portuguese. The kids, Silva thought, would learn English quickly at school, but where did that leave her?

"I decided that my children would not be my interpreters, that they would not be ashamed to introduce me to their friends," says Silva, 36. "I [became] dedicated to learning the language and focusing on my children's school life."

She enrolled in adult ESL classes, but when third child Alice was born, she couldn't bring the baby with her, and she began to lose hope.

Until, that is, her ESL teacher told her about the Family Literacy Program. Not only could Silva enroll in a class held at Gabriel's elementary school, the program offered babysitting.

"This allows the parents to come to school while their children are in school," says Beth Detwiler, an ESL Family Literacy Teacher.

The adult students read, write and speak English, and learn practical skills like shopping, making doctor's appointments and calling the police. At the same time, there is a specific focus on helping them participate in their children's education. They practice prior to teacher-parent conferences, PTA events and Open House.

"We [also] study units similar to what their children are learning, so they are better able to help with homework, understand the teacher's expectations and ... engage in their children's classroom," Detwiler says.

In fact, Silva has become a frequent chaperone for school field trips. "I could see how proud [my children] were of the fact that I was present and participating in their academic

lives," Silva says. "I was even invited to ... give a quick lecture to first grade about Brazil — an unforgettable experience."

Because of the program, parents are more involved and better able to communicate with teachers — both of which improve their student's performance, Detwiler says.

But sometimes, it's the younger students who are keeping an eye on their parents' grades.

"I will have high school students come to check in with me to make sure their mom is turning in her homework or ask what they can do to help their parent in class," Detwiler says. "I have loved watching parent-student pairs take on learning together."



Didn't pass your high school exit exam? No problem!

If you attended high school in California between 2006 and 2014 and didn't pass one or both sections of the High School Exit Exam, you may still be eligible for your high school diploma. Why? As of January 1, 2016, passing the exit exam is no longer a

graduation requirement for students, which includes those who were affected from 2006 to 2014.

Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective can review your transcripts free of charge. "Many students have earned their diploma and don't

even realize it," says Michael Brady, Director of Adult and Alternative Education. Students who lack the necessary 150 credits for the diploma can also enroll in an independent study program to make up missing high school credits.

But Brady urges students to act quickly. "A new High School Exit Exam is scheduled to be introduced in 2018," he says, "so don't delay."

VISIT NACAE.NET/STUDENT-RESOURCES/DIPLOMA TO INQUIRE ABOUT YOUR DIPLOMA STATUS TODAY!

NEVER TOO LATE

Christina and Verna took two paths to achieving the same goal: Finishing high school

BY MATT JOCKS

Returning to school felt strange at first for Christina Palacios and Verna Brown, but there is nothing odd about what that decision has meant to them.

“Adult education saved my life,” Palacios says. “Really, that’s how I feel about it.”

Says Brown: “In my family, none of us had finished high school. To be able to accomplish this, it shows it can be done. You can make your life a success if you don’t give up.”

Palacios took a harrowing path after walking away from high school at age 16.

“I’ve had a crazy past,” she says. “Substance abuse. Prostitution. Time in a federal prison. But I knew I deserved better and I had to keep pushing. I wanted to make myself proud and to have the respect of my family. I wanted more out of life.”

Palacios’ ultimate goal is to help others who were in her position. She wants to be a substance abuse counselor and work in a youth outreach center. Doing those things, however, meant completing her high school career.

An internet search about high school equivalency led her back to McClymonds High in Oakland.

Easing back into a classroom was aided by the connection she made with instructor Patricia Jackson. A couple of failing grades in science didn’t deter Palacios — she earned her high school equivalency (HSE) in November 2015.

From there, she enrolled at Merritt College, where she was vice president of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society. Her goals of a four-year degree and a career in counseling are still on track.

“Before I did this, I was very depressed. I didn’t see much of a future. I knew I needed to get my life together, but I didn’t know where to start,” she says. “If I can go from being a high school dropout to being an honor student in college, really, anything is possible.”

“If I can go from being a high school dropout to being an honor student in college, really, anything is possible.”

CHRISTINA PALACIOS
Merritt College student

“I am so proud of myself.”

VERNA BROWN
Merritt College student



Brown’s road back to school was longer. It had been 30 years since she dropped out, most of the time spent working as a nurse.

She also had a goal of service, hoping to open a group home for seniors. But there was work to be done. In her case, a lot of work.

Through adult education, Brown worked simultaneously on getting her high school diploma and getting her AA degree at Merritt College, all while working a graveyard shift.

“I was able to do it with the strength of God,” she says. “After 30 years, I didn’t know how I was going to do it, but when I found out I was so close to that diploma, I was just glued to it. And now, I am so proud of myself.”

Sitting in classes for history, a subject she never liked, Brown says she suddenly found herself becoming interested. Getting to know the stories of the students around her also helped her formed bonds that made the experience richer.

“To me, this is about more than a diploma,” she says. “It’s an achievement. I really want to get the message to people, telling them how important it is to keep the doors open, to not give up on people. I have a chance to be successful because that door was open for me.”

Christina Palacios (top right) returned to high school to earn her high school equivalency in 2015. After battling addiction herself, she hopes to be an addiction counselor one day. Verna Brown (above) worked to get her high school diploma while also pursuing an associate degree at Merritt College. She was the first in her family to complete high school.

PHOTOS BY GEORGE E. BAKER JR.

A native of Laos, Crystal Montero hopes to be a voice to speak out against human rights abuses. She will be able to do that now that she can speak English, thanks to the Berkeley Adult School.
PHOTO BY GEORGE E. BAKER JR.

FROM ESL TO GIVING BACK

Crystal risked her life to get to the U.S., where she faced another barrier: She spoke no English

BY THEA MARIE ROOD



To say Crystal Bounxayavong Montero's life has been hard is a pretty big understatement. She grew up in a small village in Laos, with a poor family, as a transgender child.

"My family was condemned by others," she says. "I was physically, emotionally and sexually abused." At 8, she found refuge in a Buddhist temple as a novice monk, but a year later, in 1976, Laos fell to the communists, and she risked her life crossing the Mekong River to Thailand before eventually immigrating to America.

"I came to the United States in 1981 in search of better opportunities, a better life and the freedom to live as a transgender person," she says.

But the U.S. presented a new challenge: She was illiterate and spoke no English.

ESL classes at Berkeley Adult School eventually turned her life around.

"Crystal is such a good example of what is possible for a student at BAS," says her teacher, Joyce Barison, an ESL Instructor and Coordinator. "She is a marvelous person who has blossomed [here]."

Montero started with ESL and business classes — specifically Business Administration and Job Preparation — to improve her computer skills while she mastered the English language. Next, she tackled more formal academic achievement, pursuing a high school diploma.

"I achieved a longstanding life goal of greatly improving my English speaking, reading and writing skills," she says. "And I am graduating next week with straight As."

Montero also was hired as a student worker at BAS and won Student of the Year through Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN). She was able to present herself as a transgender person when she received her award, an important step for Montero.

"Some people know I'm trans, and some people don't," Montero says.

"This gave me the opportunity to be myself with no discrimination."

In fact, Montero feels it's important she gained the ability to tell her life story, which can help her LGBTQI community, but also her fellow immigrants.

"It's one thing to learn English, but you also need to learn about the diversity you live with here in the Bay Area," she says.

What's next for Montero? She has accepted a job at BAS as a proctor in the computer lab, and plans to attend college. "I'd like to eventually serve as a voice to speak out against human rights abuses, especially against transgender people," she says.

"I appreciate BAS for ... getting me a step closer to my lifelong dreams."

"I'd like to eventually serve as a voice to speak out against human rights abuses, especially against transgender people."

CRYSTAL MONTERO
ESL student at Berkeley Adult School



Serving a diverse population

One of the best things about this region, and the Bay Area as a whole, is its rich cultural diversity. According to U.S. Census data, more than 100 languages are spoken in homes in the Bay Area. These are some of the most common languages spoken by our Alameda County students:

Spanish

Chinese

Tagalog

Farsi

Vietnamese

Liisa Pine Schoonmaker, Welding Professor and Department Chair for Laney College, has taught structural welding since 2013. She says CTE courses expand students' career options.
PHOTO BY GEORGE E. BAKER JR.

SKILLS THAT WORK FOR YOU

Career Technical Education
courses help students thrive

BY THEA MARIE ROOD



**“Students
of all kinds **do
better with their
basic skills** once they
engage in a Career
Technical Education
class.”**

LIISA PINE SCHOONMAKER
Welding Professor and Department
Chair, Laney College

Whether you are new to the country or simply hitting a dead-end in your current job, finding a new career on your own can seem overwhelming: What field should you choose? How do you obtain the necessary hands-on training? What credentials are required?

This is where Career Technical Education through Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective (NAC) can help.

“I’ve been teaching structural welding since 2003,” says Liisa Pine Schoonmaker, Welding Professor and Department Chair for Laney College. “I quickly realized what an impact trade skills can have to an individual, both personally and professionally.”

“It became my mission to find new ways to get this education to people who could really

take advantage of it,” she says.

The five-week NAC summer course combines GED Math with two trade skills, such as carpentry and welding.

“The students spend the first two-and-a-half weeks in one skill, then move to the other, while math is taught throughout,” says Schoonmaker, adding that both a career instructor and an adult education instructor team-teach the course. “Our class is primarily a survey course, meant to expose the students to the environment and some basic tasks of a given trade.”

If a student likes the technical work, that alone is invaluable for moving ahead with career decisions. “This gives them an idea of which trade they may want to pursue, since there is a huge variety and picking the wrong

one could be disastrous,” says Schoonmaker, in terms of wasted time and money. The unique combination of Career Tech and Adult Basic Ed can also help accelerate entrance into the field.

“They will then enter that trade at a higher level of (technical) skill, and perhaps a higher wage,” she says. “Additionally, most trade unions and many entry-level jobs now require at least a high school diploma or a GED. [Students’] options become much more abundant once they get one of those credentials.”

Finally, hands-on training can in and of itself be a positive experience for people, especially

those who are not as comfortable with books and papers. “Some students just don’t do their best in a classroom setting,” says Schoonmaker. “Giving them tools and a project can relieve some of the stress of that setting and lets a different part of their brain get involved in their learning. So often, students of all kinds do better with their basic skills once they engage in a Career Technical Education class.”



A Second Start: Ben’s story

Ben Kelley is 60 years old, a retired construction worker and a proud member of the Class of 2016. Kelley earned his high school diploma last year through Career Online High School, a program of the Oakland Public Library’s Second Start Adult Literacy Program.

“When I was younger, I had a lot of schooling and not a whole lot of learning,” Kelley says. “I went all the way through 11th grade and was totally illiterate.”

In 1996, he found Second Start Adult Literacy and began meeting with a tutor. Second Start’s flexible schedule and small classes worked for Ben as he continued working in factories and construction.

In 2013, Ben left construction after a health crisis. He found himself stuck. “I couldn’t pursue a new career without a GED or diploma.” He called Second Start for help and, together, they found the right path forward.

Today, Ben is attending Laney College. He still lights up when he points out the buildings in downtown Oakland he helped build. It’s a good metaphor for Ben’s approach to learning: He built his skills brick by brick, using every tool in his toolbox to achieve his goals. He’s the definition of a lifelong learner.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SECOND START, VISIT
OAKLANDLIBRARY.ORG/SECONDSTART OR CALL
510-238-3432.**

START YOUR FUTURE

TODAY!

Adult education provides a path to a better future, but finding the right direction on that path can require some help.

Northern Alameda Adult Education Collective (NAC), with its network of adult schools and community colleges, will lead the way. Whether you're seeking a high school diploma or equivalent, language skills to gain citizenship or career training to get ahead, NAC provides an open door and a clear route.

NAC helps students navigate through enrollment and assessment and will help them create a path tailored to their individual goals. It is an easy and affordable road forward.



Find a school near you!

Connect with the members of NAC

1 BERKELEY ADULT SCHOOL
1701 San Pablo Ave.
Berkeley 94702
510-644-6130
bas.berkeleyschools.net



2 ALAMEDA ADULT SCHOOL
401 Pacific Ave.
Alameda 94501
Satellite location:
Island High School Room 24
500 Pacific Ave.
Alameda 94501
510-522-3858
alameda-adult-school.org



3 BERKELEY CITY COLLEGE*
2050 Center St.
Berkeley 94704
berkeleycitycollege.edu
Transition Liaison:
BCC-AE@peralta.edu
510-990-0255



4 COLLEGE OF ALAMEDA*
555 Ralph Appenzato Parkway
Alameda 94501
alameda.peralta.edu
Transition Liaison:
COA-AE@peralta.edu
510-748-5269



5 LANEY COLLEGE*
900 Fallon St.
Oakland 94607
laney.edu
Transition Liaison:
LANEY-AE@peralta.edu
510-464-3398



6 MERRITT COLLEGE*
12500 Campus Drive
Oakland 94619
merritt.edu
Transition Liaison:
Merritt-AE@peralta.edu
510-434-3994



7 OAKLAND ADULT & CAREER EDUCATION
McClymonds Educational Complex
2607 Myrtle Street, Room 122
Oakland, CA 94607
510-273-2310
www.ousd.org



8 PIEDMONT ADULT SCHOOL
800 Magnolia Ave.
Piedmont, CA 94611
510-594-2655
www.piedmontadultschool.org



9 NORTHERN ALAMEDA CONNECTED
Peralta College District Office
333 E. 8th Street, Oakland, CA 94606
510-466-7247
www.nacae.net

* Ask for a Transition Liaison at these colleges!