

Pathways to Success

Grow your potential!
Sequoias Adult Education Consortium is here to help



SEQUOIAS
ADULT EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

MEET THE MEMBERS



Creating Pathways Out of Poverty

Sequoias Adult Education Consortium helps lead regional effort

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

For more than a century, adult education has helped residents of Tulare and Kings counties learn the skills they need for better lives. As the region prepares for future growth and pivots after the COVID-19 pandemic, that educational resource may be more important than ever.

Improving adult school so it meets the needs of both adult learners and where they live is the goal of Sequoias Adult Education Consortium (SAEC).

"Our region is often described as the 'Appalachia of the West,'" explains Executive Director John Werner, who grew up on a local ranch. "Our region is predominantly rural and agricultural; that's primarily our economic base."

But it's not just the scenic hills and farm country that draws that Appalachia comparison; it's the region's widespread poverty.

"Our region has a large number of residents who have attained a low level of education and people living at or below poverty level," Werner says.

These residents also may see the greatest benefit of adult education. Designed to help those who are often overlooked, adult education can be a pathway to leaving poverty for a lifetime. Now, it may be more important than ever in helping people get back on their feet, get better jobs and careers, and support the California economy as our state bounces back from the pandemic.

"Adult education is a big deal," Werner says. "We understand everybody has a different path in life and different timelines. A good income can be had without a four-year college degree. Career or workforce technical training can prepare you to get a good-paying job and economic security."

Made up of 10 school districts and



"Adult education is a big deal."

John Werner
Executive Director, Sequoias Adult Education Consortium

one community college, the Sequoias Adult Education Consortium was created in 2014 to build partnerships, bridges and pathways that benefit students, wherever they are and wherever they need to go. Its members include:

- Alpaugh Unified School District
- College of the Sequoias

- Corcoran Joint Unified School District
- Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District
- Exeter Unified School District
- Farmersville Unified School District
- Hanford Joint Union High School District
- Lindsay Unified School District
- Tulare Joint Union High School District
- Visalia Unified School District
- Woodlake Unified School District.

"Among consortia, we're unique in two ways," says Werner. "First is our board structure; it's all superintendents of member districts and a college president. No other consortium has 100 percent voting membership that's all superintendents. It gives us a very high level of decision makers on our board. We have the right people in the room to get things done."

"The other way that we're unique is the level of cooperation," he adds. "We operate in a region where people like to work together towards common goals. That includes business leaders and community leaders. We've done well to think regionally; that's powerful."

That cooperative mindset helped SAEC members quickly and effectively make adjustments to pivot to meet students' needs during the pandemic. Classes moved online with the help of mobile hotspots and wifi devices. Digital literacy classes for parents helped them become better at-home educators, helping their own children during distance learning.

Now, SAEC members are ready to help adult learners get back to work by getting the education they need to succeed.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEQUOIAS ADULT EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

SUCCESS!

Better job! Better pay! Better life! Education, degrees and certificates open doors to in-demand careers. Graduates reach their goals!

KEEP GOING

Adult learners join the workforce and start their new careers. Or they can transition to a community college or 4-year university program.

MAKE PROGRESS

Students can see the progress they've made with their new skills and confidence. They may earn a short-term certificate, diploma or high school equivalency certificate.

CTE

Career and Technical Education prepares students for a wide range of skilled, high-paying and high-demand jobs needed by our economy.

CITIZENSHIP

Learn about civics and the knowledge needed to become a U.S. citizen.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Build computer skills and be ready for a better-paying job. With this knowledge, become a better parent, too.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Learn life skills and more in an inclusive environment that encourages education and success.

HSE

High School Equivalency lets students fill in gaps in their education and earn their diploma.

ESL

English as a Second Language helps students become proficient in speaking, reading and understanding English while building needed language skills.

ASE

Adult Secondary Education builds the skills students need to further their education and earn a degree or certificate.

ABE

Adult Basic Education helps students gain the literacy and math skills they need to succeed.

PICK A PROGRAM AND PATHWAYS

Students can follow multiple pathways at once or stick to one program.

CREATE A PLAN TO REACH GOALS

Counselors help adult learners assess their needs and goals. Then, a personalized pathway to those goals is created.

FIND AN ADULT SCHOOL OR PROGRAM

Adult education providers are available at no or low cost with flexible schedules and proven success, close to where students live.

DECIDE TO PURSUE EDUCATION

Each individual journey starts with that first step. Adult learners may choose one goal – or multiple goals.

**START
HERE!**

Grow Like a Mighty Sequoia!

Success starts at the roots. Adult education helps set people up to do their best. To reach their goals, adult learners can choose several pathways that can lead to a new career, a better job, community college or university degrees, or technical certification.

NEXT STEP? A CAREER!

For English language learners, adult school offers more than just language classes. Programs offer the opportunity to build a new career through education and supports that help adult students achieve whatever goals they set for themselves.

"We can provide students with wraparound services," explains Saul Magana, English Language Coordinator with Employment Connection. "Our goal is to help (students) find employment at the same time they're attending school. Our job is to teach them the valuable skills needed to find a job ... and make sure they feel confident going into the workforce."

Employment Connection partners with adult education programs to provide students with supportive services, including:

- Job placement assistance
- Career assessment testing
- Career readiness skills such as resume writing and interviewing
- Scholarships for educational programs and testing such as CTE courses and GED exams, and other possible financial assistance through partner agencies
- Financial assistance with living costs such as rent or utility bills
- Connections with local family resource centers
- Learn how to file your own taxes and help others file for free

For more information, visit Employment Connection online at www.employmentconnect.org or call your local office at:

Visalia Employment Connection: 559-713-5000
Porterville Employment Connection: 559-788-1400
Tulare Employment Connection affiliate: 559-684-1987
Dinuba Employment Connection: 559-406-1001

More than Words

ESL programs offer students help with English, citizenship and new career options

BY ANNE STOKES

When Silvia Melendrez immigrated to the United States, she had a tough time finding a job. Back in Mexico, she had a steady career in office administration and accounting, but she found her lack of English proficiency held her back. Tulare Adult School's English as a Second Language (ESL) program helped her build the skills she needed to get hired.

"I had a hard time because I didn't speak a lot of English, it was hard to find a job," she says. "That's why I went to school, to learn another language."

According to Dr. Larriann Torrez, director of Tulare Adult School, ESL programs offer more than just language lessons. Students also can prepare for U.S. citizenship, continue their education, learn a trade skill and start a new career.

"Students have that opportunity to not only come and learn English, but really learn the skills needed to communicate out there in their everyday world," says Dr. Torrez. "We really try to embed the workforce

readiness skills into all of our curriculum, so that our students are not only signing up for an English class, they're also gaining those real-life skills needed to be successful out in the community."

Melendrez says going back to school wasn't difficult for her: Enrollment was easy, class schedules

"For me, it was very beneficial."

Silvia Melendrez
Graduate, Tulare Adult School ESL program

were convenient, and teachers were readily available to help students. In addition, ESL courses are free and don't require any prerequisites to enroll. Once they complete the program, students can get help navigating their next steps in education or career.

"For me, it was very beneficial because now I understand a little bit more and it's good for helping (my kids) with homework or for a job," says Melendrez, who also went on to earn her GED through the adult school. "When you're with (people) and they only speak English, you don't understand (and) you don't feel like you're part of the conversation. ... But now I understand."

While ESL classes have obvious benefits for students, they also benefit the entire community, according to Dr. Torrez.

"They're part of the workforce, they're part of the community, they're an active member of society," she says. "Some of them have transitioned from being on unemployment or public assistance and now they're truly providing for their family."

For more information on Tulare Adult School's ESL program, visit www.tulareadultschool.net or call 559-686-0225. Or directly contact ESL Navigator Carmen Becerra, 559-563-3072 or cbecerra@vusd.org.

Adult learners gain real-life skills along with language proficiency.



Opening Doors

Adult school diploma and GED classes give students the chance to build a new life for themselves

BY ANNE STOKES

Lesly Pineda's high school graduation may have been a little late, but it was definitely well earned. At 34, she walked the stage to accept her diploma with her family cheering her on.

"It has opened doors, one after another," she says. "My kids are proud of me and I can see the smiles on their face when they say, 'My mom is going to college,'" she says. "What I've done, I've done it for myself and I've done it for my kids."

At 15, Pineda had her first child and dropped out of high school to raise her family. At the time, she says graduating wasn't a priority.

"They make you see what you can't see in yourself and I want to do that for other students."

Lesly Pineda
Tulare Adult School graduate

"I didn't really like school, I would rather stay at home and help take care of my little sister," she says. "I thought I was just meant to be a housewife and a mommy for the rest of my life."

Eventually, however, Pineda realized how important a high school diploma can be and how many career opportunities require one.

According to Dr. Larriann Torrez, director of Tulare Adult School, accessibility is a key factor in helping students to reach their goals. To that end, GED and high school diploma classes are free to take and don't require any prerequisites to enroll.



When Lesly Pineda graduated, earning her high school diploma from Tulare Adult School in 2014, her family was there to celebrate with her.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LESLY PINEDA

"The first thing we do is go through their transcripts and really talk with them about their past schooling and look at how many credits they need," explains Dr. Torrez. "Everybody has a customized educational plan depending on where they're at and we take students at all levels. The great thing about adult education is that our doors are open for everyone."

Today, Pineda has earned both her GED and her diploma and is completing general education credits at College of the Sequoias. Having earned those credentials opened the door to a new career path: In 2008, she started working at the adult school as an instructional aide. She intends to continue her education,

earn her bachelor's degree and return to Tulare Adult School as a teacher. She credits her teachers' support with giving her the courage to do so.

"They make you see what you can't see in yourself and I want to do that for other students," she says. "We're not here to judge students, we're here to support them and to help them with what they need. That's how I felt at that time. You want someone to believe in you, not someone who will judge you."

For more information on programs offered at Tulare Adult School, visit tas.tulare.k12.ca.us or call 559-686-0225. Or directly contact Navigator Maribel Delgado, 559-280-8317 or mdelgado@vusd.org.

WHY OUR REGION NEEDS ADULT EDUCATION

Sequoias Adult Education Consortium, which includes parts of Tulare and Kings counties, serves a mostly rural part of California's Central Valley with a large immigrant population, high unemployment and low educational attainment. Here's a snapshot:



281,597
Adult population, age 18+



75,651
No high school diploma



71,525
Limited English



15,308
Unemployed



77,708
Foreign-born



122,829
Near poverty line or below



46,967
Adults with disabilities



19,358
Veterans

Source: California Adult Education 2019 Fact Sheets

Reaching That American Dream

How adult school is helping Visalia man achieve goal of citizenship

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

In 1994, when he was 14 years old, school custodian Jose Martin traveled alone from Mexico to California to live with his father. His mother had died, and the family needed money. So, instead of school, he took a job washing dishes in a restaurant.

By 2018, Martin — by then a married father of four — was living in Visalia, a diversely populated rural town in California's Central Valley. But he wanted a better job, he says. So he enrolled at Visalia Adult School to get his general education diploma or GED.

He liked the classes so much that he signed up for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

"That's when my teacher recommended that I take the citizenship class," he says.

Visalia Adult School is part of the Visalia Unified School District, a Sequoias Adult Education Consortium member.

"We offer the citizenship class to any student in our ESL program and to the public," Visalia Adult School Principal Tami Olson says.

The citizenship class presents an overview of United States history and government, and prepares students for the written and verbal portions of the citizenship exam, Olson says.

"We also have navigators from the Consortium who help students to access resources and to see if students qualify for fee waivers or payment plans to pay for the exam," she adds. "We take them right through the whole process."

Martin credits the citizenship classes with giving him an understanding of his adopted home's system of government.

"I know a lot about the government, the Congress and the other branches of government," he says. "I love this country. I want to be part of it and participate in the



For Jose Martin, the adult school opened many possibilities.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSE MARTIN

*"I love this country.
I want to be part of
it and participate in
the community."*

Jose Martin
Visalia Adult School student

community."

When his 17-year-old daughter asked him why he wanted citizenship, he said, "I want to vote."

"Now she's interested in learning how to proceed so she can vote in the next election," he says.

Martin says he also talks to his

other daughters — ages 20, 14 and 11 — about what he is learning. "We talk a lot about U.S. history, and we search on the computer together for information when we have questions."

Looking back, Martin says adult school changed his outlook.

"I'm more confident when I review my kids' homework because I understand more," he says.

Meanwhile, Martin plans to take the citizenship exam this summer, he says. "I know if I work hard and go one step at a time, I'll reach my goals."

To learn more about Visalia Adult School, visit <https://www.vusd.org/AdultSchool.cfm>. Or directly contact ESL Navigator Carmen Becerra, 559-563-3072 or cbecerra@vusd.org.

ADULT SCHOOLS BENEFIT THE WHOLE FAMILY

When parents and caregivers attend a Sequoias Adult Education Consortium member school, their children can reap big benefits, too. SAEC adult schools give grownups the knowledge and skills needed to earn a basic education, high school diploma or equivalency, pass a citizenship exam, and learn English as a second language. And with a better education, parents have the tools they need to help their children boost their own academic performance.

The need for such foundational learning became clear during the pandemic when many parents had to take a more active role in their education. Here are some of the subjects and skills that adult learners can study that can also help them teach their own children:

CITIZENSHIP CLASSES

- U.S. history
- Civics

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

- Parts of speech
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

- Beginning math
- Intermediate and advanced math
- Language arts (grammar, reading comprehension, speaking and writing)

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND GED PROGRAMS

DISTANCE LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION

Some adult schools offer a workshop that teaches parents how to use distance learning apps such as Zoom and iReady.

A Lifetime of Helping Others

Adult school helps students build a career in health care

BY ANNE STOKES

Joyce Glaspie never had the chance to get to know her grandparents: Her mother's parents passed away before she was born, and her father's parents lived far away in Texas.

"So, I decided when I was around 12 that I was going to become a nurse and take care of old people and treat them as if they were my grandparents," she says.

As a young girl, Glaspie excelled in school and thrived in gifted classes. Even after she was sent to an alternative school for teen mothers due to a pregnancy during her freshman year, she still managed to graduate a year early. After graduation, she supported her family, cleaning houses and working at a local factory, but quickly found it unfulfilling.

"I knew that I had the ability to do something else with my life. I think it was because of that early schooling where I was always in the advanced classes," she says. "I knew I had more potential than the factory, but what I didn't have was the family support and I didn't have the finances."

With traditional college out of reach, Glaspie searched for a faster route to a new career. That's when she found the vocational nurse program at Hanford Adult School.

According to Heather Keran, Alternative Education Manager with Hanford Joint Union High School District, the health care field has many job options in the Central Valley.

"There is a huge demand at all levels of the health field for staffing with patient care as the core responsibility of CNAs, LVNs, phlebotomists, respiratory techs, and innumerable other ancillary positions up through the nursing staff," says Keran. "In our education programs, with as little as one semester to two year's worth of invested time, a student has applicable, marketable, job-ready skills that they can go with into the workforce."

For Glaspie, the path from licensed vocational nurse (LVN) to registered nurse (RN) was a difficult but rewarding journey, one that allowed her to support her family and build a career she loves. Today, she's still in school, both as a student working toward her master's degree and as an educator: She's currently coordinator of the vocational nursing program at Visalia Adult School.

"I try to encourage as many people as possible to do a career technical education or trade school," she says. "If you don't have the support and finances to do a traditional college, there's still another route for you. No one told me that so I want to encourage others who might be in similar situations that they too can be successful."

For more information on health care and other career pathway options, visit www.sequoiasadulthood.com/pathways. Or directly contact Health Care Navigator Maribel Delgado, 559-280-8317 or mdelgado@vusd.org.

Joyce Glaspie used adult education to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOYCE GLASPIE



"If you don't have the support and finances to do a traditional college, there's still another route for you."

Joyce Glaspie
Vocational nursing program coordinator, Visalia Adult School

KINGS COUNTY JOB TRAINING OFFICE

If cost is what's keeping you from starting a new career, Kings County Job Training Office (JTO) can help.

"We assist individuals who are looking to either upgrade their skills or looking for work," says Vince Velo, JTO program manager. "We want to set them up for success. ... The goal is to help individuals get the skills they need and match them with employment."

JTO has several programs to connect students and job seekers with:

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- Local credentialed schools
- A variety of career paths
- Job placement assistance

ON THE JOB TRAINING

- Matches job seekers with employers
- JTO pays a portion of wages for three months

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Places job seekers on social assistance programs with employers
- JTO pays wages up to six months

Through the federally funded Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, JTO can help students with:

- Tuition
- Testing fees
- Travel/transportation costs
- Uniforms
- Textbooks and required tools

For more information on what programs and supports are available near you, visit kingsedc.org or call 559-585-3532. Services are available online, by phone and in-person (by appointment only).

Learning Logistics of Life

Adult students find route to job opportunities

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

There's a boom growing in the Tulare-Kings counties region, as commerce and industry make their way back from the pandemic and new ventures move in. Consequently, job opportunities are growing.

On the scene to help its students find their career pathways and connect them to employment is the Sequoias Adult Education Consortium (SAEC) and its many partners.

SAEC's goal is straightforward: To provide its adult students with the education they need to find jobs. The variety of career choices offered to students are varied, from business and manufacturing to health care and food service.

Especially vibrant in the community is the industrial segment, sparked by e-commerce and logistics, points out Devon Jones, economic development manager for the City of Visalia.

The scenario works like this: Consumers order goods, which in this case are warehoused (and sometimes manufactured) in Visalia's Industrial Park. Some of the Park's distribution centers are global and national in scope, such as VF Corporation (apparel and footwear) and Jo-Ann Fabrics (fabric and crafts).



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT GONZALES

"We're trying to be on the cutting edge. We're here to support our students in making better lives."

Robert Gonzales
Alternative education administrator,
Cutler-Orosi Adult School

Devon Jones, economic development manager for the City of Visalia, sees big possibilities in logistics.

PHOTO COURTESY DEVON JONES

How to keep track of all that merchandise? The answer: Logistics. It's the science of managing the flow of goods between Point A (their origin) and Point B (their destinations), as well as curating the goods while they're in the warehouses.

"Industrial job growth is of particular interest, as these tend to be primary jobs, producing goods and/or services for customers that are predominantly outside the community, which in turn generates new 'outside' dollars for circulation in the local economy," Jones says.

The Cutler-Orosi Adult School, 15 miles north of Visalia, is part of the SAEC and that "local economy." "We're enrolling some of our students in Visalia Adult School's Global Warehouse Logistics program," says Robert Gonzales, COAS alternative education administrator. "Some of them have already worked at the Industrial Park and had employment at VF."

The majority of his students continue to work in agriculture, he says, "But we give them educational opportunities to move on from that. We get them diplomas that can start the pathway to logistics through Visalia Adult School or the Logistics Workplace Skills Academy at the



College of the Sequoias in Visalia."

The COAS mantra is "eliminate all barriers to education," Gonzales says. The school does that by offering digital literacy classes, citizenship classes, face-to-face small-group instruction and, until the pandemic, transportation to classes and day care for the children of parents attending classes.

"We're trying to be on the cutting edge," he says. "We're here to support our students in making better lives."

For more information on Cutler-Orosi Adult School, visit <http://www.cojused.org/Student-Services/Adult-School/>. Or directly contact Navigator Carmen Becerra at 559-563-3072 or cbecerra@vusd.org.

IN-DEMAND JOBS AND INDUSTRIES

While the pandemic took its toll on many Central Valley businesses and industries, some jobs skills are still in demand.



HEALTH CARE

Registered nurses are particularly in high demand, but other positions such as medical assistants, physical therapists, phlebotomists (who draw blood) and record specialists have seen increases.



BIOSCIENCE

With the development of coronavirus vaccines, bioscience has seen an increase in demand and projected growth throughout California, including entry-level positions.



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

With so many people working from home, there has been an increased need for cyber security, computer support, network specialists and software development.



RETAIL

Essential businesses such as grocery stores as well as online stores have an increased need for workers.



FINANCE

Positions such as bookkeeping and audit clerks saw resilience during the pandemic and will be in greater demand in California's rebounding economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

During the pandemic, Maria L. Garcia kept studying English, thanks to a Chromebook made possible by a special grant.
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIA L. GARCIA



'English is very important here'

Mom keeps up with classwork with the help of a donated laptop

BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Like many immigrants to this country, Mexico-born Maria L. Garcia has faced a range of predicaments for not knowing English – the United States' primary language.

Upon arriving in Tulare County as a young adult, Garcia discovered that for non-English speakers, "simple things can become highly complicated," as she put it. That includes such tasks as trying to buy items in a store.

Her frustration grew until she had enough of the language barrier.

In late 2019, the 56-year-old housewife enrolled in an English as a Second Language class at Alpaugh Junior-Senior High, near her Alpaugh home. The twice-a-week ongoing class is offered through Corcoran Adult School's Alpaugh extension program in partnership with Alpaugh Unified School District.

"English is very important here," says Garcia, referring to the United States. "I want to be conversant in that language."

On the first day of class, about a dozen students seemed keen to learn. Their teacher, Lauren Urmson, welcomed them. Then COVID-19 hit in early 2020. Some students dropped out. Only seven pupils, all women from Mexico, remain.

Recently, each received a Chromebook, made possible by a special grant. They review English lessons on the laptops while continuing to meet in-person, adhering to COVID-19 protocols.

In Mexico, Garcia completed sixth grade in a tiny community. Continuing her education would have required daily bus rides to a school 20 miles away, a commute her father deemed perilous.

"Where I lived, the school ended in sixth grade, so that's as far as I went."

Maria L. Garcia
ESL student

"Where I lived, the school ended in sixth grade, so that's as far as I went," Garcia says.

In 1988, she married Rafael Garcia, a kindly man. Soon, the newlyweds immigrated to Alpaugh, where they

raised four children, all now adults, at least three of whom have attended college.

To help support her family, Maria at times picked oranges, apricots and cotton. Her husband is a tractor driver and soil irrigator.

In parts of Tulare County – like the Latino-owned supermarkets where Maria shops with ease – Spanish dominates.

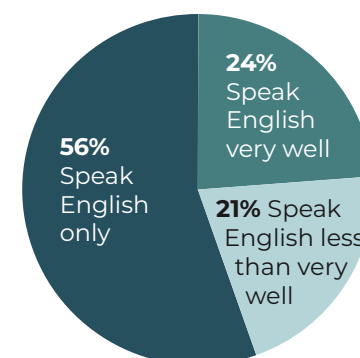
Visits to other establishments can be daunting. For instance, the Garcias went to a huge hardware store, seeking a showerhead and related items for their bathroom. Despite prodigious efforts, they couldn't find what they needed – or Spanish-speaking staff. English-speaking employees tried to help. Unfortunately, the couple didn't know the English names of the products they needed. A bilingual person eventually intervened, allowing the couple to make the purchase.

The experience showed Maria a future job opportunity, she says. "After I learn English, I would like to work in a store as a cashier or stocker."

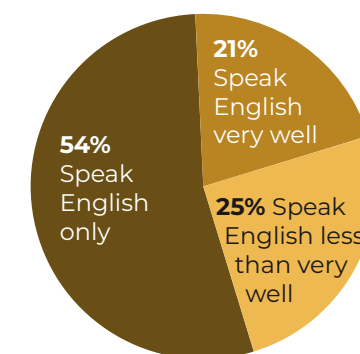
For more information on Corcoran Adult School's ESL program, visit <https://kingslake.corcoranunified.com/ESL> or call 559-992-8885. Or directly contact Navigator Alida Mora at 559-303-3390.

LANGUAGE ABILITY

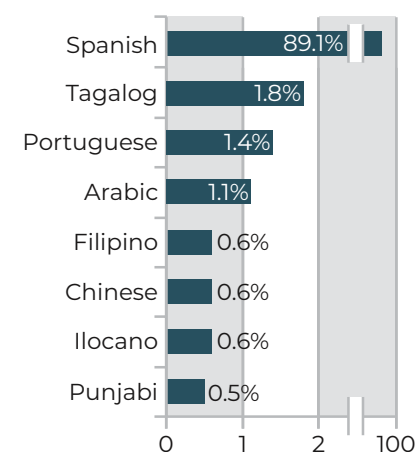
CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE FIGURES



SEQUOIAS ADULT ED CONSORTIUM FIGURES



LANGUAGES* SPOKEN AT HOME IN TULARE AND KINGS COUNTIES



* Other than English
Source: California Adult Education 2019 Fact Sheets

Many Opportunities on Horizon

Adult learners getting ready for boom times ahead

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

As the regional business hub of Tulare and Kings counties, the fast-growing trade area of Visalia is seeing a surge in job opportunities as established businesses begin to rebound from the pandemic and new ventures open up.

Sequoias Adult Education Consortium (SAEC) plays an indispensable role in filling those jobs and fortifying the area's workforce. For instance, its Career Technical Education programs offer a diverse array of career pathways, from Office Skills and the new Basic Electricity, to Welding and the new Global Warehouse Logistics.

"The logistics program will attract more workers into the industrial sector, as it will help pull back the curtain on what goes on in those large facilities in the Visalia Industrial Park," says Devon Jones, economic development manager for the City of Visalia. "As the labor demand grows, having proactive partners such as the Sequoias Adult Education Consortium and the Visalia Adult School (VAS) is a must."

VAS principal Tami Olson notes that "Amazon is opening a fulfillment center here this fall, bringing 1,000 jobs, so we're getting the word out about warehouse logistics."

The most in-demand CTE classes are medical. "We can't get our licensed vocational nurses and our certified nursing assistants out fast enough," Olson says.

Sometimes, VAS students will begin on one career pathway and then, for any number of reasons, pivot to another. That was the case with Hal Sousa, known at VAS as one of its "success stars."

Sousa, 33, came to California from Brazil at age 19 and enrolled at VAS, taking English as a Second Language while working at a dairy. He also took

"I became a millionaire by the age of 28. It all started with Visalia Adult School. Otherwise, I'd still be working at a dairy."

Hal Sousa
Visalia Adult School graduate



A native of Brazil, Hal Sousa learned English and became a U.S. citizen, thanks to Visalia Adult School. The experience truly changed his life.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HAL SOUSA

citizenship classes at VAS, passed his citizenship test and became a U.S. citizen in 2012.

Next came his medical assistant certificate from VAS and general education classes at College of the Sequoias and as groundwork for a nursing program.

"I was working for a doctor who urged me to go to medical school, so I signed up for a physician's assistant program at San Joaquin Valley College and finished the requirements, but the program was canceled," Sousa says.

Meanwhile, he'd been investing in real estate, went to real estate school, got his license and went to work at Keller Williams Realty, the international real estate franchise.

"I became a millionaire by the age

of 28," Sousa says. "It all started with Visalia Adult School. Otherwise, I'd still be working at a dairy."

For more information on Visalia Adult School, visit <https://www.vusd.org/AdultSchool.cfm> or call 559-730-7655.

STRENGTH IN PARTNERSHIPS

With its eager-to-work graduates trained in specialty fields, the Sequoias Adult Education Consortium plays a vital role in fostering workforce development in Tulare and Kings counties. To accomplish that, the SAEC maintains a network of community partners that monitor the employment scene and do much of the hiring. Together, they're sparking Central California's economic recovery from the pandemic.

"We help our students find their career paths," says Tami Olson, principal of Visalia Adult School.

"Many of these jobs can lead to household-supporting careers," adds Devon Jones, economic development manager for the City of Visalia.

FOR EXAMPLE, THESE ARE SOME OF VISALIA ADULT SCHOOL'S PARTNERS:

- The City of Visalia ("It keeps us abreast of what jobs are coming," Olson says)
- Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County/Employment Connection
- Community Services and Employment Training
- Proteus (employment services)
- Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft in Visalia Industrial Park
- VF Corp., also in the Park
- Kaweah Delta Hospital
- Family HealthCare Network
- College of the Sequoias



Meeting Students Where They're At

Navigator answers common questions about adult school programs **BY ANNE STOKES**

As an adult school navigator in the Visalia Unified School District, Carmen Becerra guides adult students — particularly those learning English as a second language — on their educational pathways. She helps them reach their goals, starting from where they're at. Becerra answers some common questions about adult education opportunities.

How do adult education programs benefit students?

It depends on what their needs are. If they want to go back to school to complete a high school diploma or GED, get a job or pursue higher education ... adult school is here to serve you in any capacity you need.

What types of courses are available?

There are courses ranging from high school diploma/GED, adult basic education (and) English courses for those who need to either learn or perfect their English skills. We have certifications (including) certified nurse assistant, introduction to caregiving, or culinary arts. We also have licensed vocational nurse. We have welding and basic electrician programs to maybe get your feet wet in a new field.

Logistics and warehousing are something that's really big in the valley — we have a lot of warehouses and distribution centers here — and that's one of the courses we offer at several of our schools.

How do you enroll?

You need your name, address, phone number and email to create your account and then you register for a class. Then we'll schedule you for your placement test and usually you can start classes in a week or two, depending on the program.

Because of social distancing, everything has gone virtual and we have a lot of our students go to our website and register ... or you can go to the school and someone can assist you with the process.

"Adult school is here to serve you in any capacity you need."

Carmen Becerra
ESL navigator, Visalia Unified School District

What are some of the most common obstacles that students face? How do adult school programs address their needs?

Some of the issues that our students have is finding the time. We're all adults, some have kids, some have work and it's really hard to find the right schedule for them in the right program.

We do offer evening courses; some of our short-term programs are also available in the evening. Since the pandemic, all of our ESL, adult

education, GED and high school diploma classes have gone online, so students don't even have to be on campus to do the program; they can work on it from home. The programs are mobile-friendly so they can even do it on their phones. Teachers are available via phone, email or in person, so you can meet with them if you have an issue.

What type of job-placement support is available for students after they've completed their program?

As navigators, we provide resources: We can help you with resume building, we can help you with interview skills, we can help you with job applications online. We also have our One Stop (partners) come in and do presentations for us as well. Pre-COVID, we had job fairs on site where employers would come in, talk with students and let them know what kind of employment they have available and if they want, they can come in and apply.

We work very closely with One Stop, or AJCC (America's Job Center of California), and we do referrals out to agencies where they can get help finding employment right away.

Find the right person to answer your questions at <https://sequoiasadulthood.com/ContactUs.asp>. Check out our Online Pathway Mapping Tool: <https://sequoiasadulthood.com/pathways/index.asp>. For more information, visit sequoiasadulthood.com.

IT PAYS TO KNOW

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, getting an education pays off: Not only do higher levels of education usually result in higher earnings, they also correlate to lower rates of unemployment.

MASTER'S DEGREE

- Median usual weekly earnings: \$1,497
- Unemployment rate: 2%

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

- Median usual weekly earnings: \$1,248
- Unemployment rate: 2.2%

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE

- Median usual weekly earnings: \$887
- Unemployment rate: 2.7%

SOME COLLEGE (NO DEGREE)

- Median usual weekly earnings: \$883
- Unemployment rate: 3.3%

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

- Median usual weekly earnings: \$746
- Unemployment rate: 3.7%

LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

- Median usual weekly earnings: \$592
- Unemployment rate: 5.4%

MEET OUR NAVIGATORS



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559-303-3390

FIND AN ADULT SCHOOL PROGRAM NEAR YOU

COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS (COS)



- 1 COS Visalia Campus**
915 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277
559-343-6315
- 2 COS Hanford Educational Center**
925 13th Ave.
Hanford, CA 93230
559-583-2500
- 3 COS Tulare College Center**
4999 East Bardsley Ave.
Tulare, CA 93274
559-688-3000
www.cos.edu



- 4 Corcoran Adult School Kings Lake Education Center**
1128 South Dairy Ave.
Corcoran, CA 93212
559-992-8885
kingslake.corcoranunified.com/Adult-School



- 5 Cutler-Orosi Adult School Family Education Center**
40802 Road 128
Orosi, CA. 93647
559-528-6006
www.cojUSD.org/Student-Services/Adult-School/



- 6 Farmersville Adult School**
281 S. Farmersville Blvd.
Farmersville, CA 93292
559-747-6205
www.farmersville.k12.ca.us/Domain/668



- 7 Hanford Adult School**
905 N. Campus Drive
Hanford, CA 93230
559-583-5905
Para español: ext. 7504
www.hjuhsd.k12.ca.us/Domain/12



- 8 Lindsay Adult School**
290 N. Harvard Ave.
Lindsay, CA 93247
559-562-5913
www.lindsay.k12.ca.us



- 9 Tulare Adult School**
575 W. Maple Ave.
Tulare, CA 93274
559-686-0225
www.tulareadultschool.net



- 10 Visalia Adult School**
3110 E. Houston Ave.
Visalia, CA 93292
559-730-7655
www.vusd.org/AdultSchool.cfm



Sequoias Adult Education Consortium Where Growing Never Stops

Support and protect this valuable resource in Tulare and Kings counties!

Including the College of the Sequoias and 10 school districts, this regional organization's mission is to facilitate the alignment and collaboration of adult education. Each member works together to provide the education and training that residents need, and prepare skilled workers for our region's future.

>> Learn more at sequoiasadulthood.com



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