



# Opening Doors to a **Better Future**

*Adult Education in Orange County*

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

“Adult schools fill an important gap in the education service because they are dealing with ... the neediest of students.”

STEVE CURIEL,  
PRINCIPAL, HUNTINGTON BEACH  
ADULT SCHOOL



PHOTO COURTESY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH ADULT SCHOOL

# Your Future Is Calling

Adult education opens the door to a better job and a better life

BY MICHELLE CARL

**What drives the single mom to go back and finish high school? Or the immigrant who speaks no English to want to learn the language?**

They know education is the key to opening doors in life. Education is the difference between the job they have and the career they want.

Having students who are there because they want to be is what makes adult education so special, according to Steve Curiel, principal at Huntington Beach Adult School.

“When you have a classroom full of students who want to be there, that chose that day to show up to class, when they didn’t have to ... it definitely changes the environment for the teacher and the whole school,” he says. “It’s really neat to experience and be around students who are often overly appreciative that they get to come to school.”

For more than 40 years, adult schools in Orange County have been serving students who want to better their lives through education. Adult education in California dates back to the Gold Rush, when an influx of migrants sought elementary-level education in subjects such as English and math, and more technical job skills, like drafting or bookkeeping. Adult schools have adapted over the years to the changing economy, providing courses students need to advance in an evolving workforce. In many cases, adult schools are the only place for adults to turn for this knowledge.

“Adult schools fill an important gap in the education service because they are dealing with, in many cases, the neediest of students who aren’t really ready for a college-level academic program,” Curiel says. “Students who don’t have a high school diploma or don’t know English — for them to jump into a community college, it’s very

challenging.”

Funded by the same state dollars that pay for K-12 schools, adult schools have a unique ability to reach these students and help them achieve the basic skills that will lead to greater achievements. Curiel says an easy application process makes going back to school less intimidating. Because they are part of local school districts, adult schools are able to utilize K-12 classrooms in the evenings when they are empty. This not only allows districts to save on the cost of renting facilities, but enables them to offer classes closer to where students live. Huntington Beach Adult School currently has 40 sites that offer classes, and Curiel says every student is within 10 minutes of a school site. Adult schools also offer a less expensive alternative to technical schools.

Just because applying is easy and tuition is affordable doesn’t mean adult education is any lower quality. Curiel says adult schools are governed by school districts, which report to the state of California Department of Education. Adult schools are required to have approved curricula, credentialed instructors and safe learning environments.

“Because our classes are so inexpensive they denote that with quality, and that’s just not the case,” he says. “In the pharmacy tech program, our students have a 96 percent pass rate on national certification.”

The end goal is creating a more employable individual. Whether it’s basic skills in math, reading or writing that most jobs require, or advanced training in a career such as health care, adult schools give people the tools to improve their lives.

## Why do you support adult education?

“I have been a supporter of adult education because of the crucial role it plays in civic development and improving adult literacy, which increases workforce readiness, and leads to a better quality of life. K-12 schools are the cornerstones of our communities and they are conveniently located for most people. It makes sense to use existing school facilities so we can spend more resources on actually educating adults.”

State Sen.  
Mark Wyland



“I would say I’m a big supporter of adult education and I would resist efforts to scale it back. I believe, especially in these uncertain economic times, that it allows people to retrain or re-hone their skills to further their career. Within the K-12 infrastructure there are economies of scale, so they don’t have to create a new framework, and it’s more cost-effective.”

State Assemblyman  
Don Wagner



“Adult Education has been serving Californians for many decades, helping non-traditional students, seniors, parents, and immigrants obtain the valuable real-world skills they need to become productive members of society. Often, the parents of the students being served in our K-12 schools need these adult services to better assist their children with schoolwork at home. Adult Education programs should be retained in California, and I believe they are best maintained under the existing K-12 structure because it is extremely important that these courses be convenient and accessible for parents and working adults.”

State Assemblywoman  
Sharon Quirk-Silva



Angel Torres finished his GED courses at Capistrano Adult School and is now seeking his high school diploma.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

“The reason why I wanted to get myself more educated is so I could get a better job and improve my financial situation.

ANGEL TORRES,  
CAPISTRANO ADULT SCHOOL STUDENT

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# It's Never Too Late

Getting your GED or high school diploma at any age can improve job prospects

BY MEREDITH J. GRAHAM

**F**or Angel Torres, education is key. As someone who didn't have access to an education when he was growing up in Mexico, he now views it as an opportunity to be seized. After several years of working full time and going to school, he received his General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Now he's set his sights on his high school diploma.

“My parents never went to school. They put us through school, but it was very limited,” Angel says. “When I came to the United States, it was hard for me. I saw that without speaking English, without having an education, it was much harder for me to overcome difficulties.”

Angel came to the United States in 1996, when he was 19 years old. He didn't speak a word of English. One day when he was at the grocery store with his nieces, who were bilingual but too shy to translate for him, he realized he needed to learn English himself. So he enrolled in English classes at Capistrano Adult School. Now he speaks fluently.

“The reason why I wanted to get myself more educated is so I could get a better job and improve my financial situation,” Angel says. “I also want to motivate my younger relatives, so they can say, ‘My uncle did it, we can do it, too.’”

About 10 years ago, with the help of his English skills, Angel got a job at a local

IHOP restaurant, which he now manages. While working, he started taking classes toward his GED. He chose Capistrano Adult School because he'd had a positive experience there with his ESL classes.

“They have really good programs for adults,” he says.

He struggled with the GED test, in particular the format of it, but he was able to pass with the aid of knowledgeable and caring instructors. “The teachers were very helpful,” he says.

Many jobs require a high school diploma or GED. For high school dropouts like Angel, adult education is a way to improve one's job prospects as well as pay scale. But Angel isn't stopping at his GED. He's determined to earn his high school diploma, also at Capistrano, which he says will take three to four years.

“I'm trying to get my high school diploma because I eventually want to jump into college, and I would love to have a career someday,” Angel says. He believes he's a testament to the fact that it's never too late to go back to school. He also says he hopes to serve as a positive role model for his nieces and nephews and to other adults as well.

“It takes some time, but it is rewarding at the end of the journey,” he says.

## Getting your diploma, made simple

According to Jolene Dougherty, Principal of Capistrano Adult School, “Passing the GED (General Educational Development) test doesn't have to be difficult, even if it's been years since a student attended school.” Orange County adult schools offer preparatory courses and the opportunity to take practice tests. The campuses are ready to prepare students for the new GED test and fully online format for 2014.

In addition to GED classes, adult schools also offer a chance to obtain a high school diploma. Courses range from math and science to English, art and history, with the goal being for each student to pass the California High School Exit Exam.

Students interested in attending school for their GED or high school diploma should contact their local campus for orientation dates and times.

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I do believe in second chances, and adult school is a second chance for all of us.

FRANCISCA F. VIORATO DE RIGGLE, SADDLEBACK VALLEY ADULT SCHOOL GRADUATE

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# A Second Chance for Success

After many detours, woman excels thanks to ESL classes

BY MIKE BLOUNT

**W**ere it not for second chances, Francisca F. Viorato De Riggie would have a very different life today. The 33-year-old mother of two received her GED certificate last year and is looking forward to her first semester in college. But it would not have been possible without the programs at adult schools in Orange County.

Back in 1994 while most teens were watching “The Bodyguard” and listening to Nirvana’s “MTV Unplugged,” Francisca was adjusting to life in the United States after moving here from Mexico. She was one of eight children in a single-parent, migrant family household. Her mother worked two jobs to support them, and as one of the older children, Francisca had to help take care of her brothers and sisters.

“I was so overwhelmed because the change was too much for me,” Francisca says. “I was always watching my brothers and sisters. It was hard for me to make friends and I couldn’t do the things I wanted to do.”

Although she returned to Mexico to live with her grandparents for a short time, she realized there was no future for her there or in the U.S. caring for her siblings. At 16, she ran away from home to live with acquaintances.

“They were nice and took me in so I could go back to school, but it was very hard,” Francisca says. “I had to get up at 5 a.m. because the school was two hours away and I had to take a bus to get there. Eventually, I just gave up and dropped out.”

Francisca moved in with family members before reuniting with an old friend from Mexico. The two began dating and Francisca became pregnant with her first child, Nayeli.

She moved in with her daughter’s father and lived with him for the next seven years, but going back to school always remained in the back of her mind. When Francisca and her boyfriend decided to split up in 2006, she knew it was time to enroll. Francisca signed up for English as a Second Language classes and GED classes at Saddleback Valley Adult School.

She found employment with a medical supply company as a warehouse manager. Her supervisor told her she had potential to move up in the company, but her English skills were holding her back. With encouragement from her supervisor and ESL teacher, Francisca made great strides in learning English, but she was never able to focus on school like she wanted. In retrospect, she believes she took on too much. But she was not deterred.

Five years later in 2011, Francisca signed up for GED classes for the second time and earned her certificate a year later. Today, she is happily remarried with a second child, and is looking forward to attending college with plans to major in business management.

“I do believe in second chances, and adult school is a second chance for all of us,” Francisca says. “It changed my life a lot, and I’m very grateful to live in this country and take advantage of opportunities like adult school.”

## Connecting through successful communication

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at adult schools allow learners to gain confidence in reading and writing English. As a result, students can be more involved with their families, jobs and communities.

Students sign up for ESL classes for many reasons. Danny Morris, director of alternative education at Irvine Adult School, says ESL classes open up many doors for students that were previously closed.

“Some students sign up because they want to be able to communicate with their children’s teachers and the school district,” Morris says. “Others sign up because they just want to improve communication in their day-to-day lives. We see students moving up in their jobs and even some going from ESL classes to pursuing their GED or high school diploma. It’s all over the board, but we’re focused on serving the community.”

“There are so many people from lots of different countries, and we are all improving our English every day.”

SHAMILA SEIFURI,  
IRVINE ADULT SCHOOL STUDENT

Shamila Seifuri and her daughter moved from Iran to the United States in 2011. Through English as a Second Language classes at Irvine Adult School, she has improved her English skills so she can communicate with her daughter's teachers and other parents.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

# Effortless English

Student improves her skills through ESL classes

BY MIKE BLOUNT

Even though Shamila Seifuri began learning English in the sixth grade in Iran, she struggled to speak English confidently when she moved to the United States with her husband in 2011.

Shamila, who had worked in the petroleum industry for 12 years in Iran, says she looked into several options to help her speak English. The 35-year-old considered enrolling in college, but the tuition would have been too expensive for her. Ultimately, she decided to take English as a Second Language classes through Irvine Adult School because of the cost and convenience.

“When my husband got a job here — he works as an electrical engineer — I was not allowed to work because of my visa, so I wanted to work on improving my English,” Shamila says. “It is different speaking English in an [English-speaking] country. It’s much more difficult. One of my friends told me about adult school and I have been in ESL classes for eight months.”

ESL classes at Irvine Adult School have helped Shamila improve her skills and confidence in speaking English. Now, she says she is able to communicate with her daughter’s teachers and other parents

to plan play dates. Shamila says even her 7-year-old daughter has noticed her improvement, only correcting her on minor things like her accent and pronunciation.

“The class and teacher are very good, and I’ve learned a lot since I’ve been there,” Shamila says. “The teacher pushes us to go out and speak more. I think my English is much better now after eight months. Classes are not expensive and they are a very friendly place to learn.”

Because of ESL classes, Shamila says she can now enjoy watching films and reading books she might have missed out on before. She’s currently in the advanced ESL class. Once she has her green card, she has plans to either go back to work in her field or enroll in college to major in chemical engineering. Her only wish is that her class met more often.

“My English has gotten so much better because of adult school,” Shamila says. “But I want to learn even more. There are so many people from lots of different countries, and we are all improving our English every day, learning how to communicate. Adult school is the best place for people like us to learn how to speak English.”



## Learning the language

Whether you’re just starting to learn English or you have been speaking for a few years, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at adult schools are a great community resource. Director of Alternative Education at Irvine Adult School Danny Morris says one of the most beneficial things for students is the ability to tailor ESL classes to their needs.

Students learn things like basic conversation first and then move on to expanding their vocabulary. Becoming proficient in reading and writing depends on how quickly the student is

able to learn, but overall, Morris says students who are in the program are very successful.

“When a student comes in they are given a test or orientation so they can be appropriately placed,” Morris says. “Students feel comfortable when they are in a class with other students who are speaking at their level. Teachers work with each student and are flexible. They can change curriculum on the fly to help a student with a particular lesson. They are accessible to each and every student.”



Danny Morris is the director of alternative education at Irvine Adult School.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF IRVINE ADULT SCHOOL

“Adult students are motivated to learn. They have to do it because they have families.”

PAMELA CANLAS, INSTRUCTOR AT  
HUNTINGTON BEACH ADULT SCHOOL

## Moving on up

Life sometimes takes us in unexpected directions. Whether you've been laid off and are looking for a new career path, you're tired of your current position and want to try something new, or you just want to advance in your field, you're likely going to need a new set of skills. You might even need a certificate or to pass an exam. That's where Orange County adult schools come in.

Through career training and technical courses, students of all ages can gain the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle a job in a new field. Huntington Beach Adult School offers career-advancement courses as well as a range of training programs, including those to become a pharmacy tech, medical assistant, medical coding and billing worker, administrative office assistant or data entry clerk.

Training courses typically span several months and some have prerequisites, which are also offered at the school. At the end of training, students are prepared to enter the workforce or to take licensing exams.

For more information on the career-training programs at Huntington Beach, call 714-842-4227 or log on to [www.hbas.edu](http://www.hbas.edu) and click on the "Career Training" tab.



Pamela Canlas is program coordinator of the pharmacy technician career-training program at Huntington Beach Adult School.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

# A Prescription for Success

Instructor prepares students to become pharmacy technicians

BY MEREDITH J. GRAHAM

**A**s an instructor at Huntington Beach Adult School, Pamela Canlas sees firsthand the dedication of her students. In 2010, she created the school's pharmacy technician program, drawing on a decade of experience. Since then, she's taught 14 sessions, which average a dozen students at a time.

"My goal was to be a pharmacist, but somehow this door opened for me and it was the right fit," Canlas says.

Canlas incorporates her own experiences as a pharmacy tech into her curriculum, which she stresses is more hands-on than book-based. She feels confident that her students are getting a top-notch education, and they have the test scores to prove it.

"I have a high passing rate as far as the national exam — 96 percent," she says. "That tells you a lot about the program and what we're teaching."

One of Canlas' recent graduates, Garrett Sakai, is typical of the kinds of students who find a home in Huntington Beach Adult School's career training programs.

Three years ago, Sakai lost his job and after about a year and a half of searching for work in his field, he decided to try something different.

"I used to be a science student at UC Irvine, so I decided to go into pharmacy tech because it wouldn't be completely foreign to me," he says. He passed the 12-week course and went on to the national licensing exam,

which he also passed. Now he's employed as a pharmacy technician at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance.

"Without taking the pharmacy tech course, I'm not sure what I would be doing right now," Sakai says.

He describes the course as both rigorous and practical. With just 14 students in the class, Canlas was able to offer one-on-one guidance. She taught not only the basics of generic versus brand-name drugs and what they do, but also offered real-world anecdotes.

"I teach them accuracy over speed," Canlas says. "I worked in an environment where we had 1,500 patients a day, and the wait time was incredibly long. You can't help but try to speed up the process — but with speed, errors happen. That inspired me to teach others to focus on accuracy and not speed. Your patients will live longer that way."

Within six months of receiving his license, Sakai was employed in his new profession.

"For someone like me, who had to go outside of their established field, I am proof that someone can go through such a program and find a job in that new field," he says.

For Canlas' part, she gets a lot of support from the school, but it's the students — and success stories like Sakai's — that keep her excited to show up for work each day.

"Adult students are motivated to learn. They have to do it because they have families," she says. "This could be their bread and butter."

## Preparing for career success

Adult schools make it easy to gain a competitive edge on the job market, with locations in your neighborhood, evening or accelerated course offerings, and affordable fees. Check out some of the following opportunities:

**COMPUTING SKILLS.** In today's job market, being knowledgeable about computers can open doors in many fields. From basic computing to courses on software applications like Photoshop, QuickBooks, Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, these classes can boost your résumé.

**CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.** Some adult schools offer specialized certificate programs, preparing students for entry-level positions in a variety of fields. For example, adult school programs can help students prepare for the following careers:

- Accounting
- Digital photography
- Medical assisting
- Office/data entry clerk
- Medical coding and billing
- Pharmacy technician
- Administrative office assistant

Bharati Sharma received help securing a job from her instructor Randa Baird at Huntington Beach Adult School's Medical Assisting career-training program.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

# The Fast Track to Employment

Student finds job success through Medical Assisting program

BY SHANNON SPRINGMEYER

**In 2012, Bharati Sharma found herself out of a job. With a family to support, she was unsure how to make ends meet. She needed new skills and experience, and she needed them fast.**

She connected with the Orange County One-Stop Center, a federally funded employment agency in Westminster. There she was referred to the Medical Assisting program at Huntington Beach Adult School. Entering the medical field seemed like a natural fit for Bharati, who had previously completed two years of college education in the biological sciences. Bharati was attracted to HBAS's "affordable fees and convenient, commutable distance," she says. Getting started at HBAS was an easy experience, she notes.

"I had one-on-one counseling by the counselor at Huntington Beach Adult School. The counselor made me feel at home," Bharati says. She felt supported in making informed decisions about career training, a benefit not always available through alternatives like online programs, she says.

Bharati credits the staff at HBAS with providing an excellent program, which helped prepare her to be competitive.

"HBAS has an extremely knowledgeable and experienced staff that is always willing to help their students. The smaller class sizes make the education an almost one-on-one basis," she says. "My instructor went above and beyond to support me with what I needed to be successful."

As a student, Bharati's commitment to her studies made an impression on teachers and potential employers alike.

"She was so dedicated to working hard," says Randa Baird, coordinator and instructor for the Medical Assisting program at HBAS.

"We felt lucky [to have her] because she was an excellent student." Bharati's dedication helped her secure an externship with a family practitioner, which led to full-time employment as soon as she completed her coursework, about a year after she started.

Baird, who has taught at HBAS for 26 years and is herself a 20-year veteran of the medical field, says this is common.

"I know a lot of the doctors in the area. A lot of them rely on us when they need somebody to go to work, because they know my training program," Baird says. "So, I get calls for jobs, I get calls for externships. I'm always making new connections with new offices."

Baird notes that many of her former students have used the program as a steppingstone to enter the medical field and advance from within. Alumni have gone on to become nurses, physician's assistants and even doctors. And the program at HBAS offers a good alternative to similar programs at local community colleges, which have been impacted with high enrollment and have waiting lists that delay education by years, she says. By contrast, students at HBAS can complete the program in as little as three months, saving time and money.



“My instructor went above and beyond to support me with what I needed to be successful.”

BHARATI SHARMA,  
HUNTINGTON BEACH ADULT SCHOOL GRADUATE

Bharati is glad she enrolled in the HBAS program and highly recommends it.

"I have a sense of achievement," she says. "This job has definitely helped me in building my self-esteem and confidence. HBAS has made a huge difference in my life."

## Career connection

Adult schools play a vital role in helping people who are unemployed gain the skills they need to rejoin the workforce. For example, local One-Stop career centers enjoy an ongoing collaboration with Huntington Beach Adult School, and often refer clients to one of HBAS's five career training programs. One-Stop centers receive funding from the federal Work Investment Act, and assist qualifying job-seekers in securing employment and retraining for new careers.

One-Stop centers can help provide unemployed individuals with funding for job retraining if they meet certain requirements.

"The reason why the One-Stops like to work with us versus the private companies is that we are short-term," says Tracy Foreman, Career and Technical Education coordinator at Huntington Beach Adult School. "[Students] can actually complete a program within six to nine months."

A comparable program elsewhere may take as many as 18 months to complete, Foreman says, resulting in a higher cost to the student in time and money.

HBAS also helps arrange externships for students, arming them with valuable work experience and networking opportunities, which has led to success on the job market for graduates of HBAS's programs, Foreman says.

Bonnie Castrey has spent 28 years on the board of Huntington Beach Union High School District, championing educational opportunity and adult education.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

# Fighting to Protect Adult Schools

School board member has seen benefits of adult education

BY SHANNON SPRINGMEYER

## Bonnie Castrey's 28-year tenure in education leadership springs from very personal roots.

"I would not be who I am today had I not had a very fine public education," says Castrey, a mediator by profession who has also served as a trustee of the board of Huntington Beach Union High School District since 1985. "My family always stressed the need for being educated in order not to live in poverty."

Castrey has witnessed how adult education can offer a new start. At 15, Castrey's sister was a high school dropout. She received a second chance, however, when she attended adult school to earn her high school diploma and continued on to complete college and a master's degree in education. Now a teacher, Castrey's sister works to aid students who, like herself many years prior, may be at risk of dropping out. Her sister's success solidified Castrey's commitment to ensuring educational opportunities for the entire community, and she has emerged as a champion for adult education. Though she is a strong supporter of community colleges, Castrey contends that adult schools meet needs that cannot be met through other avenues.

"Making education available locally and through our adult education center ... is just critical," Castrey says. "People can walk there; they don't have to take buses. It's not a huge campus that they get lost on."

Adult schools also offer a much lower cost, providing access to those who are economically disadvantaged and most in need of opportunities to gain language and employment skills, Castrey says. Castrey has been instrumental in securing funding to build a site to house Huntington Beach Adult School, and in ensuring that

budgetary woes did not decimate the program. In fact, the adult education program is now expanding, and is constantly changing to remain relevant and useful.

"As the world of work has changed, we have offered more and more diverse programs in order to meet the needs of the community. Our community really looks to us," Castrey says. She notes that the program has boasted enrollment of up to 20,000.

In addition to providing high school diploma and GED certificate courses, the program offers general and specialized career training, ESL, and courses aimed at keeping older adults active and healthy. Some classes, such as tax preparation, are offered as daylong or multiday seminars, rather than semester-long courses, meeting a need that would otherwise remain unmet in the community.

In a time of embattled budgets, funding for adult education programs is increasingly under attack. Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed that adult education in California be housed within the community college system, rather than K-12 school districts. Castrey disagrees, positing that districts should be given the choice to continue their adult programs.

"I think we serve a different community and a different interest in our community, and believe that we should keep our program going," Castrey says. "The world is changing so fast that we have an obligation to instill, in people of all ages, the desire for lifelong learning, and then to provide meaningful and affordable opportunities for them to continue to learn."



“The world is changing so fast that we have an obligation to instill, in people of all ages, the desire for lifelong learning, and then to provide meaningful and affordable opportunities for them to continue to learn.”

BONNIE CASTREY,  
SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEE

# Meeting Unique Needs in the Community

## Learning how to be a parent

**H**aving a child does not mean you instantly become an expert on raising children. Parenting classes at adult schools in Orange County offer new parents the opportunity to build confidence in their parenting skills, while socializing with other new moms and dads in the community.

Suzanne Chen, a parent education teacher at Huntington Beach Adult School, says parenting classes can also help parents learn together.

Parents are able to bounce ideas off of each other and try different parenting approaches with their children.

“We have a variety of parent seminars and information to take home,” Chen says. “The biggest advantage to the program is learning your strengths and weaknesses as a parent. You have the opportunity to grow as a parent and that growth continues throughout your child’s life.”

Chen also adds that parenting class serves as a hub for community

resources. If a parent notices something concerning in their child’s development, teachers and other parents in the class can point them toward community services that can evaluate their child. Sometimes, Chen says parents help each other out when they are in need.

“One of the most satisfying things is having a support group that forms with parents in the class,” Chen says. “It helps them realize they are not alone.”



STOCK PHOTO

## Keeping your mind and body active

**E**nrichment programs through Orange County adult schools provide both physical and mental stimulation for adults of all ages who have a desire to keep learning and stay active. Some of the enrichment classes offered include painting, ceramics, exercise, yoga, film appreciation and vocal training. These programs are designed to empower adults with a youthful enthusiasm for learning, while enhancing their overall quality of life.

Research has shown that continuing to learn may help us stay healthier as we age. The Brain Fitness course was

developed from extensive research and testing, and is comprised of two software programs: “Sound” and “Sight.” Each program is combined with classroom activities and results have proven to lower the “brain age” of participants by as many as 10 years with extensive gains in memory, vitality and visual and auditory processing speeds.

For more information on enrichment programs through Orange County adult schools, check out a catalog online or contact the adult school nearest you.



STOCK PHOTO

## Serving special needs adults

**O**range County adult schools offer special needs classes for adults with developmental disabilities. Faculty members and staff provide an inclusive environment that is conducive to learning. These classes give persons with disabilities the opportunity to learn from materials and exercises specifically catered to their needs to enhance and reinforce their skills.

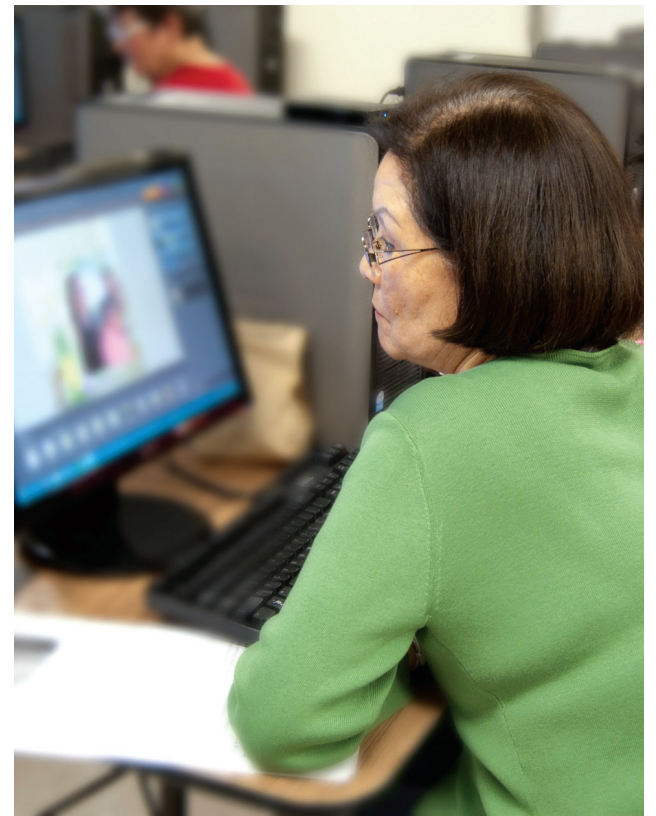
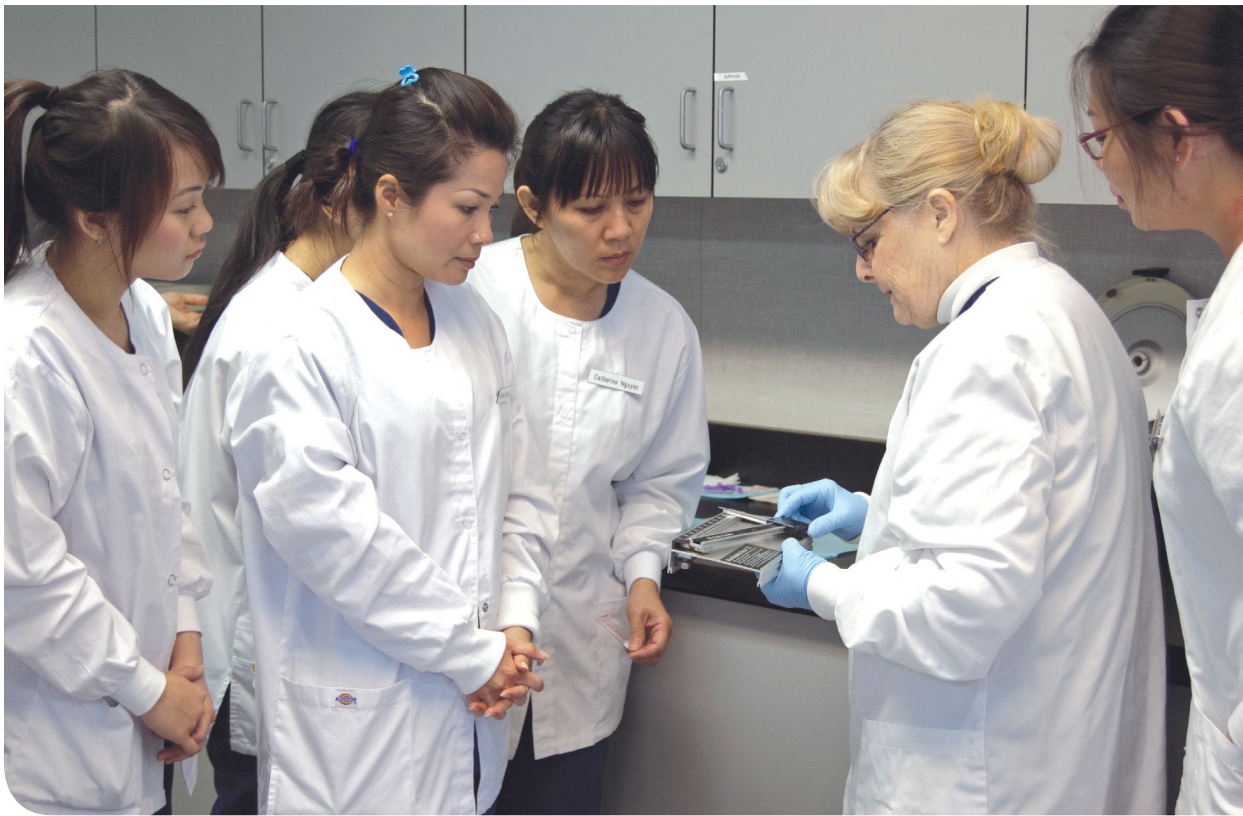
Paul Yao has been a student in the Saddleback Valley Adult Education special needs program for the past 28 years. Yao has Down syndrome, and through the program he was able to gain essential life skills and confidence that helped him get a job. Yao has also competed as an athlete in the Special Olympics. In 1987, he won two gold medals in swimming at the Japan National Special Olympics, and he continues to compete as an athlete today.

Yao’s mother, Helena Yao, believes the special needs program has improved her son’s overall quality of life.



Paul Yao has gained skills that helped him gain employment thanks to Saddleback Valley Adult Education. PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA

“Today, he is so confident and he is never afraid to try new things,” she says. “We are so lucky he went to this program. He is a happy and productive person because of it.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH ADULT SCHOOL

# Frequently Asked Questions

**A**dult education can offer the opportunity to improve a person's life. Classes, schedules, financial aid and enrollment will vary in each district, but most adult schools will work with students to accommodate their needs. For more information, contact your local adult school's main office.

## Who is adult school for?

Many different people utilize adult schools to better their lives. Whether you are taking career training classes to advance in your professional career or taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to improve your English, adult schools can provide you the education and confidence to be successful at whatever you do in life.

## Is adult school just for getting my GED or high school diploma?

Adult schools offer GED or high school diploma classes, but they also offer so much more. Several career training programs are available that teach students a skill, such as floral design or computers, or prepare them for a career, such as small business administration or medical coding. Additionally, some schools may offer enrichment courses such as ceramics or yoga classes. Adult schools offer a wide scope of services.

## What classes are available?

At most adult school sites in Orange County, career training, ESL and GED and high school diploma preparation classes are offered.

## Who can enroll in adult school?

Any student 18 or older can enroll in an adult school. In some cases, high school students who are 16 or older can enroll with a referral from their high school or if they have been withdrawn for 90 or more days. Eligibility for high school students will depend on the school district's requirements.

## How do you sign up for adult school?

Some adult schools offer online enrollment through their website, but in general, most will require you to contact the school to make an appointment to meet with a certified counselor. Counselors can assist you through the enrollment process and help you make important decisions about your education.

## How much does adult school cost?

Costs for classes and textbooks will vary for each adult school. Some adult school classes will require students to purchase additional reading or supplemental online course materials in addition to the base cost of the class.

## Do adult schools offer a quality education?

One misconception is that because adult school classes are affordable, they do not provide a quality education. Most Orange County adult schools are accredited and follow all education guidelines set by the state of California.

## Is financial aid available?

Yes. Financial aid may be available for certain classes, to cover tuition or for class materials and textbooks. Contact your local adult school to speak with a counselor about financial aid.

## Where do you take classes?

Classes at Orange County adult schools take place at different locations, including on K-12 public school campuses. Adult school sites are located within communities near public transportation for convenience.

Steven Curiel advises the California Department of Education on issues that affect adult education as a member of the Adult Education Field Partnership Team.  
PHOTO BY SALVADOR OCHOA



STOCK PHOTO

# The Future of Adult Education

After surviving budget cutbacks, funding still a major issue

BY MICHELLE CARL

**A**dult schools have always adapted to the needs of their students, and as the economy changes, they will continue to make sure students have the skills for the jobs of the future.

But the recent recession dealt a major blow to adult schools, one that challenged their ability to provide a vital service to communities.

Two factors led to this, according to Steve Curiel, a member of the Adult Education Field Partnership Team, which provides feedback to the California Department of Education on issues that affect adult education. One was the recession that began in 2008, which caused a reduction in school district revenues across the state. The second was that school districts were given full flexibility in how they spent their limited funds. Whereas before, money designated for adult education had to be used for adult education, schools could now decide to use that funding for K-12 programs.

“School boards and superintendents had to choose between adults and kids, and in that respect, the adults were always going to lose,” Curiel says.

Many school boards were focused on educating kids, and funding adult programs was a lower priority. Adult schools suffered dramatic cuts, including Huntington Beach Adult School, which was dealing with reduced funding while also trying to finance a new school site.

“We got our budget cut in half,” says Curiel, who serves as principal of Huntington Beach Adult School. “Since then I think we’ve survived the best compared to neighboring districts, which were cut more or closed entirely.”

Adult school programs that didn’t shut down completely were now faced with fewer state dollars. Some raised fees or began to charge for classes that were once fully funded by the state. Many dropped certain classes due to declining enrollment. At Huntington Beach Adult School, enrollment went from 15,500 students down to 7,000.

Curiel and others in adult education say that the solution is dedicated funding, and the Department of Education, the Department of Finance and the governor’s office are working toward that end. But questions remain over how much funding to dedicate and where it should come from, especially after Gov. Jerry Brown’s suggestion that adult education be operated by the community college system.

“They are in agreement that adult education has to have funding and that it needs to be protected funding. The issue now is how much and when,” Curiel says.

But an uptick in the economy means brighter skies ahead. The Legislative Analyst’s Office has projected \$4.2 billion more dollars for education spending in 2014-15, so Curiel says now is the time to make sure that adult education gets the dedicated funding it needs.

Curiel says the recovering economy has also led to a steady increase in enrollment. And the timing couldn’t be better. As the baby boomers retire and the economy grows, Curiel says there will be a need for a more skilled workforce to fill the jobs of tomorrow.

“There are a lot of people working in jobs that are not going to exist in the next few years,” he says. “Because of technology, it’s minimizing those low-skill jobs, but people working in those jobs are not going away — they’re still there.”

That’s why Curiel says it’s important for those people to enroll in an adult education program to not just upgrade their technical skills, but to work on academic skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving.

Ultimately, it’s the link between adult education and the economy that makes adult schools valuable to the community. Curiel hopes that supporters of adult education contact their legislative representatives and the governor to make sure funding for adult education is secure in the future.

“Orange County adult schools are working hard to try to bring back our services that we’ve been providing to the community for decades, and we would appreciate the support of our community in that battle,” he says.

“

Orange County adult schools are working hard to try to bring back our services ... and we would appreciate the support of our community in that battle.

STEVE CURIEL,  
ADULT EDUCATION FIELD  
PARTNERSHIP TEAM

”

# Open the door

*Enroll in an Adult School Today*

Orange County adult schools offer you the opportunity to better yourself through an education at an affordable cost. Whether you want to work on your English-language skills, obtain a GED or receive career training, adult schools are a great community resource that can improve your life. Contact an Orange County school district today to get information on enrollment, financial aid and class start dates and times.

## Garden Grove — Lincoln Education Center

11262 Garden Grove Blvd.  
Garden Grove, CA 92843  
714-663-6291  
[www.ggusd.us](http://www.ggusd.us)

## Tustin Adult Education Center

15400 Lansdowne Road  
Tustin, CA 92782  
714-730-7394  
[www.tustin.k12.ca.us/domain/41](http://www.tustin.k12.ca.us/domain/41)

## Irvine Adult School

3387 Barranca Parkway  
Irvine, CA 92606  
949-936-7454  
[www.irvineadultschool.com](http://www.irvineadultschool.com)

## Saddleback Valley Adult Education

25598 Peter A. Hartman Way  
Mission Viejo, CA 92691  
949-837-8830  
[www.goadulted.com](http://www.goadulted.com)

## Huntington Beach Adult School

17231 Gothard St.  
Huntington Beach, CA 92647  
714-842-4227  
[www.hbas.edu](http://www.hbas.edu)

## SUPPORT Adult Education

Budget cuts are decreasing options for adult education in Orange County. The following adult schools closed their doors following cutbacks:

- Fullerton Adult School
- Anaheim Adult School
- Orange Adult School
- Placentia-Yorba Linda Adult School

## Newport-Mesa Adult School

2045 Meyer Place  
Costa Mesa, CA 92627  
949-515-6996  
[adulthood.nmusd.us](http://adulthood.nmusd.us)

## Capistrano Adult School

31431 El Camino Real  
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675  
949-493-0658  
[www.capistranoadultschool.org](http://www.capistranoadultschool.org)

