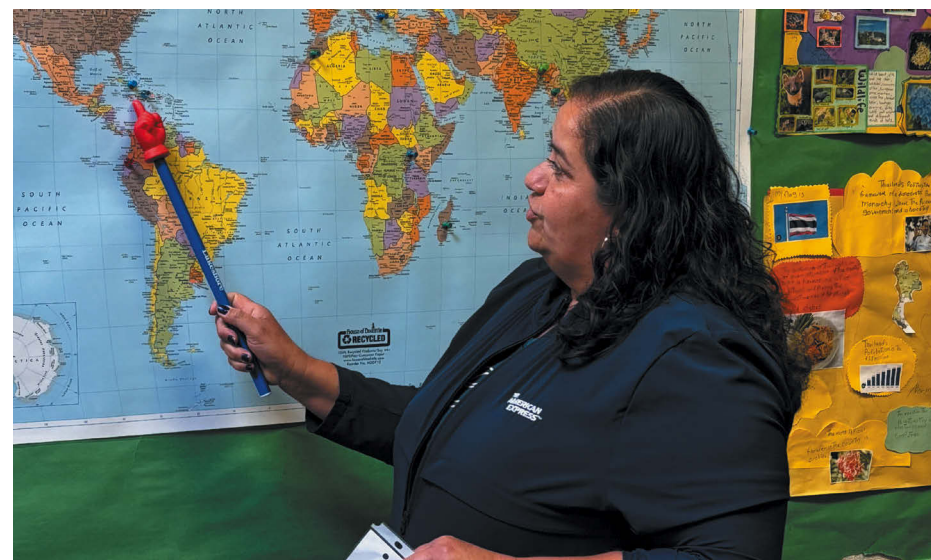




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Adult & Career Education



VOLTEAR PARA PASAR A LA TRADUCCIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

A Welcome Place for Everyone



Kim Jones says that in addition to helping students, OACE helps build a better community by providing a strong workforce for employers.
PHOTO BY GEORGE E. BAKER JR.

Oakland Adult and Career Education changes lives and contributes to a stronger community

BY ANNE STOKES

Kim Jones likens adult school to a stepping stone. It's a place where anyone can come, find their footing, and make the leap toward a new career, citizenship, a diploma or any number of goals. Regardless of where you're coming from, adult school can help get you where you want to be.

"We provide opportunities and resources for people who want to go after their goals, whether that be a new job, learning English, or academic goals like high school diplomas," says Jones, director of Oakland Adult and Career

FINDING ACCEPTANCE AND EASY ENROLLMENT

Unlike similar public or private programs, OACE offers classes at little to no cost with virtually no barriers to enroll. For students without a high school diploma, there are classes to help you earn one. For those who want to learn English, there are teachers who can help. For people looking to start a new career, OACE offers several Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways that can take as little as one to three months to

SUPPORT IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Jones says understanding students' individual needs is vital to their success. Teachers and staff work to meet them where they're at, and to offer and connect them with appropriate support and provide a safe place for students to feel welcome.

"We literally have students who've walked here from Central America. ... We're asking people to come back to school, and in some cases come to school when school was never accessible," he says. "It's an amazing thing to watch as some of our students progress through our programs and go from ESL to high school diploma to job training. It's a wonderful thing to see."

"Adult education programs offer hope."

KIM JONES
Director of Oakland Adult and Career Education

Education (OACE). "But the real benefit is to the community at large: We have an educated workforce that's able to attract businesses to our community which provides economic advantages."

"Adult education programs offer hope," he says. "We offer a foundation for our students, considering a lot of our students are language learners."

learn the basics for an entry-level job.

For the few courses with costs, financial help may be available to OACE students looking to continue their education. OACE's flexible schedules offer classes during the day, evening, night and online, enabling students to fit school into their lives along with work, family and other obligations.

Meeting students where they're at often includes providing support outside the classroom. OACE partners with community organizations to provide employment connections, help with continuing on to higher education, finding financial assistance and more. OACE's transition liaison connects students with support from Job Centers of America, re-entry programs, the local workforce development agencies and more.

The American Dream

Citizenship course enables student to fulfill 25-year goal

BY ANNE STOKES

Ermelinda Velasquez had dreamed about obtaining her American citizenship since she arrived in the country a quarter-century ago. For the past decade, she's worked in fast food restaurants, but wanted the career and life opportunities for herself and her children that citizenship could provide. When she found Oakland Adult and Career Education's ESL citizenship class, it was just what she needed.

Velasquez realized this dream in January 2024. She says that without the preparation and training she received at OACE for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization interview and test, she wouldn't be the citizen she is today.

"I wasn't able to understand anything watching YouTube videos, or even reading books because I wasn't even able to read. That's why I went to the school, where I was actually able to learn. I wanted to go to be in-person with people like me," she says. "It's really important to be a citizen in this country so you can be able to be here. That's pretty much everybody's dream, to be a citizen."

Velasquez says that while preparing for the test was difficult, the educational and emotional support she found with her teachers was critical to her success. After applying for citizenship in October of last year, she was sworn in in January 2024.

"By the glory of God, I became a citizen, and thanks to my teacher as well," Velasquez says. "The teacher was really great, she had a lot of patience with me and repeated herself so many times because I couldn't read, because I didn't go to school."

For so many students like Velasquez, adult school programs like OACE are just the start of their new lives and careers.

For now, Velasquez is enjoying her new citizenship status, working and caring for her family. While she doesn't have any concrete plans yet, she is sure she wants to continue her education.

"My first plan was to become a citizen so I could have a better job and be able to build a better future for my kids," she says. "After that I would like to go to Mexico and see my family because my family is the most important thing for me and it's been a little while since I've seen them. Once I'm back, I'm going to start learning English of course."

"That's pretty much everybody's dream, to be a citizen."

ERMELINDA VELASQUEZ

U.S. citizen and Oakland Adult and Career Education student

"It's a bridge to your goals, it's a bridge to your community, it's a bridge to college," says Kim Jones, director of OACE. "That's the beauty of adult school, it's a bridge to anywhere, whether that be your career or whether that means getting more involved in your community."



Ermelinda Velasquez was sworn in as a United States citizen in January 2024.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ERMELINDA VELASQUEZ

The Confidence to Succeed

OACE helps students build themselves a solid foundation

BY ANNE STOKES

There are many reasons people immigrate to the United States: Some come for freedom, some come for work opportunities, many come to build a better life for their families. Rodolfo Juarez Ramirez came for love.

After a long-distance relationship with his now-wife, he arrived from Mexico in 2018, but quickly realized love is not all you need: He would need to further his education and improve his English skills to find a job.

“I needed my GED to be able to achieve my goals and the GED opened those doors for me,” he said. “When I arrived in this country a few years ago, I didn’t speak much English, I spoke very few words, very limited, and some of the time I couldn’t even express myself.”

Today, Juarez Ramirez has a steady job as an outreach worker supporting patients at La Clinica De La Raza—a non-profit health clinic primarily serving underserved communities—and is working on improving his English skills. He says neither of those things would have been possible without Oakland Adult and Career Education.

“The GED certificate was one of the requirements to obtain the job,” he says. “I feel more confident talking to people ... [and] now I can hold a conversation, and I can communicate myself correctly, and I can also assist patients in the clinic as well.”

“I needed my GED to be able to achieve my goals and the GED opened those doors for me.”

RODOLFO JUAREZ RAMIREZ
OACE graduate

Juarez Ramirez says he’s grateful for all the care and support OACE teachers and staff showed him, not only giving him the strong foundation needed to pass the GED exam and learn a completely new language, but the emotional support as well.

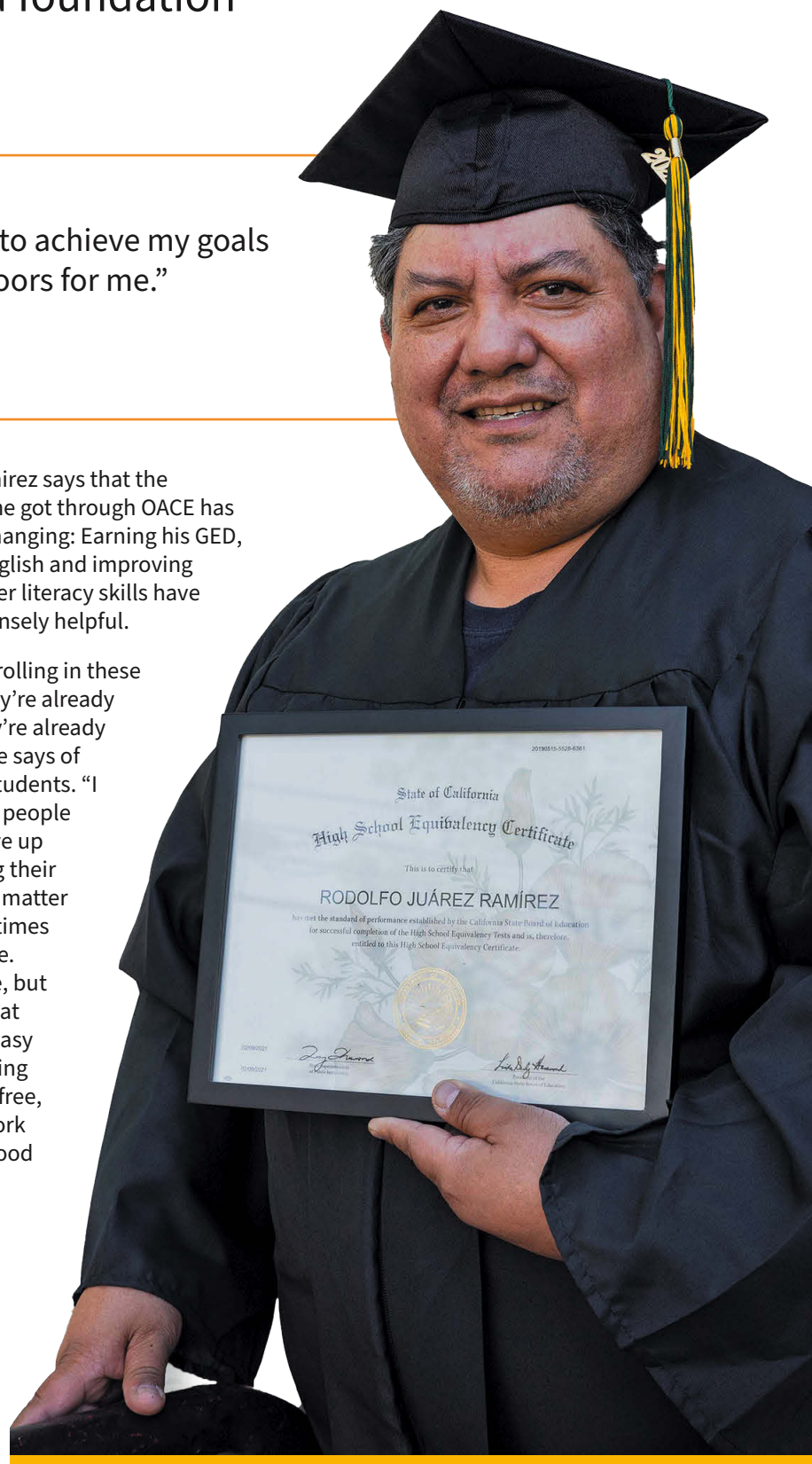
“He loved, loved, loved this class. He’s made life-long friends, he still keeps in touch with the teachers, the students, [Director] Kim Jones, and everyone,” says his wife, Sandra Gonzales. “He’s become more confident, he’s become more sure of himself, I see him having conversations with people he normally would not have. ... This was the best thing he’s done.”

She also notes that he was asked to be the keynote speaker for his 2020 graduation class.

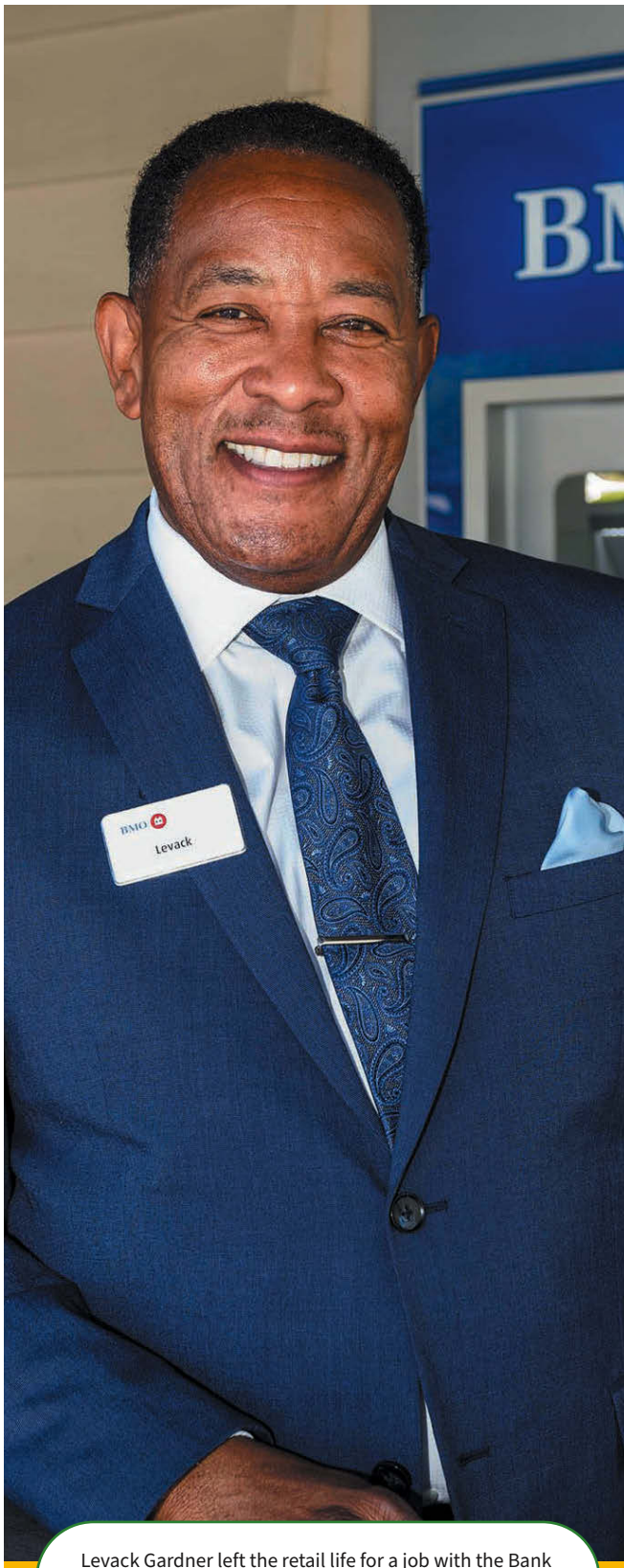
“For me, it was a great honor to be the speaker for my class because I was able to transmit, on behalf of all my classmates, all those things we wanted to say to our teachers,” Juarez Ramirez says. “Basically it was gratitude for helping to fulfill my dreams, not just mine but all of the students as well.”

Juarez Ramirez says that the education he got through OACE has been life-changing: Earning his GED, learning English and improving his computer literacy skills have been immensely helpful.

“Just by enrolling in these classes, they’re already ahead, they’re already winners,” he says of his fellow students. “I want to tell people to never give up on pursuing their dreams, no matter how many times you stumble. We stumble, but we know that nothing is easy in life, nothing is given for free, but hard work will bring good rewards.”



Retail, Banking and Beyond



Levack Gardner left the retail life for a job with the Bank of Montreal after completing the BankWork\$ program.
PHOTO BY GEORGE E. BAKER, JR.

BankWork\$ program gives participants a foothold in the financial industry

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

After several years working in the retail industry, Levack Gardner had enough. He no longer wanted to work nights and weekends and miss out on spending time with family and friends.

"I needed a change," Gardner says. "I was actively seeking work opportunities in other industries, but I felt that I wasn't getting any traction; not getting any visibility."

Then in August 2023, Gardner sought advice from a friend, Dr. Michelle Hector, a teacher at Laney College in Oakland who taught a course called BankWork\$. The national program is an eight-week training program that gives students the skills needed for entry-level jobs in banking. Graduates go on to careers as tellers, customer service representatives, and relationship and personal banking professionals. Dr. Hector told him that Oakland Adult and Career Education was offering BankWork\$ and that he could take the classes at Laney College free of charge.

"I decided, 'You know what? I'm still not working right now. I'm not getting any offers. Why not reeducate yourself, sit down, go to a class format and learn something new about the financial industry, which runs the United States?'" Gardner says.

He attended the BankWork\$ classes in person and on Zoom

"There's all different subjects and material that are out there for someone who wants a change. They just have to start the process."

LEVACK GARDNER
BankWork\$ graduate

from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., three days a week for eight weeks, he says.

"The classes were very extensive, very detailed, and very structured. We had homework, we had exams, you weren't going to just skate by," he says.

Toward the end of the course, Gardner says he and his classmates practiced answering job interview questions through role-play.

"That was challenging for me. You had to talk about yourself in 30 seconds so someone could understand who you were," he says.

The students then practiced their interviewing skills in class in front of regional bank vice presidents and branch managers.

"That made you nervous, too, because you had to get yourself up to speed because you were looking to get an opportunity to find work in a bank somewhere."

Finally, the class began filling out job applications from area banks.

"That was also challenging," says Gardner, "but the instructors held our hands along the way. You weren't alone."

After earning his BankWork\$ certificate last fall, Gardner landed a job with the Bank of Montreal as an associate banker, a job he started in January 2024. He is now enjoying his new career in the financial industry.

"And I don't commute anymore," he says.

Moreover, the bank job allows him more time to spend with his wife, Rohonoda, and to be available to spend time with family during the holidays.

Because of his experience at Laney College, Gardner encourages others desiring a new career to explore the range of job training programs offered through the college and OACE.

"There's all different subjects and materials that are out there for someone who wants a change. They just have to start the process."

Setting—and Reaching—Goals

Transition liaisons support students embarking on new educational and career journeys

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT



“I appreciated that adult schools were supporting learners from special populations, supporting low-income, disabled, and underrepresented parts of our population with obtaining basic skills.”

MARIA EINAUDI
Transition Specialist, Oakland Adult and Career Education

While going back to school as an adult opens new doors, navigating enrollment, choosing courses and juggling classwork—on top of managing work and family—can be overwhelming. That’s why students at Oakland Adult and Career Education turn to people like Maria Einaudi for support.

As a transition liaison for OACE, Einaudi helps students pinpoint their educational and career goals

and choose the right classes. She also assists with enrollment and job training programs, as well as identifying any available community resources.

“I meet with students and help them enroll in college classes, start job training programs, and get connected to housing, immigration or other relevant resources they might need,” she says. “I’m always educating myself as I go along about all the different eligibility requirements and what’s needed.”

With many first-generation immigrant students, the school offers English as a second language (ESL) courses and ESL family literacy classes for parents of young children. Moreover, Einaudi says a growing number of adults are accessing high school equivalency classes and OACE’s job training programs in order to enter careers like plumbing, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) and electrical fields.

As an OACE transition liaison, Einaudi sits down with students individually to ask about their objectives and helps them map out their next move, whether it’s sharing information with them about an ESL class, helping with a resume, exploring jobs, or helping them transfer to a community

college or a job-training program. In fact, OACE partners with agencies and nonprofits that provide short-term training programs in areas such as banking, healthcare, and the trade professions.

Einaudi says she came to work at OACE in 2007 teaching students with disabilities. In 2018, she made the switch to transition liaison.

“I appreciated that adult schools were supporting learners from special populations, supporting low-income, disabled, and underrepresented parts of our population with obtaining basic skills,” she says. “It’s only right that we continue educational opportunities for those who, for so many different reasons, need it beyond 12th grade or never had access to it to begin with, or need it just to skill up for employment.”

Whether it is helping a student choose between ESL options or advising them on careers, Einaudi says she enjoys working with adult students because they usually know what they want.

“And, when I see people get what they want, it makes the job satisfying.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIA EINAUDI

Uplifting Families

Family literacy programs empower parents to better support their children in school, life

BY ANNE STOKES

Being able to communicate is something many people take for granted. Talking with your doctor, parent-teacher conferences and reading important documents all require an understanding of English, something Latifa Aldabashi didn't have when she came to the US from Yemen eight years ago.

to enable parents to play an active role in their children's education, including digital literacy so parents can support their children's learning using the computer and online resources.

"Now I can do homework with my daughter. At first I didn't try to do it because it was hard for me, but now I can do it," Aldabashi

"Now I can do homework with my daughter. At first I didn't try to do it because it was hard for me, but now I can do it."

LATIFA ALDABASHI
OACE Family Literacy Student

"When I first came to America, I didn't know a lot of things, I didn't get any information or study English in my own country," she says. "I didn't know how to speak English, I didn't understand the people who were speaking to me in English. But now I can understand anything. Sometimes it's harder, but it's way better than before."

Thanks to Oakland Adult and Career Education's family literacy program, Aldabashi has been able to improve her English skills, benefiting herself and her family. The classes are designed

says. "My daughter benefited a lot, she speaks to me in English, I understand her and I speak with her. My family also benefited because I can read any kind of documents or online information, I don't need to get any help from my friends or family like before."

The Family Literacy program is one of several English as a second language (ESL) courses offered to help students improve their reading, writing and speaking skills. The class builds integration with the host school site to help students partner with their child's teachers and school staff. All ESL

classes are free, as is daycare for family literacy students with children between 2 and 5 years old.

"The ESL is contextualized to help them engage with the child's school: They learn how to interact with the school, how to access resources, how to help their child get through the school system," explains Kim Jones, OACE director. "Think about it: You come here, you're new to the country, you have your kids in a school system you know nothing about ... it's something that a lot of people have the privilege to not think about."

Aldabashi says teachers were very patient and their encouragement made a world of difference for her. Today, she's still working on her English skills at College of Alameda. In the long term, she hopes to improve those skills enough to find a job.

"At first I was afraid to talk, afraid to say something wrong while speaking, but they told me I should be learning from my mistakes and right now I can speak better," she says. "I want to make my dreams come true and I want to work in the future as well."



English lessons in OACE's family literacy classes are contextualized to help parents learn how to help their children with schoolwork. PHOTO COURTESY OF OAKLAND ADULT & CAREER EDUCATION

One School, Many Sites

OACE offers educational opportunities all over town to best serve the city's adult learners

BY ANNE STOKES

Parker Elementary School served its East Oakland neighborhood for nearly 100 years before declining enrollment forced its closure. Families were so distraught that parents occupied the school for months rather than accept its loss.

Thankfully, in 2022, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) board voted to repurpose the facility into the Parker Community Resource Center and new home of Oakland Adult and Career Education (OACE).

“We are always looking for opportunities to serve students where they're at with what they need.”

MICHELLE DEIRO
Principal, Oakland Adult and Career Education

“We were going to go in there to serve the community,” says Michelle Deiro, OACE principal. “We definitely saw this as a great opportunity to increase our programming and serve more students in East Oakland.”

Today, adult learners can take English as a second language (ESL) and citizenship classes, earn their high school diploma, HSE high school equivalency, or enroll in job training through career technical education (CTE) classes which enable students to get certified and to work within a few months. OACE's expanding CTE opportunities include construction, healthcare and more.

Rather than consolidating classes onto a single campus, OACE offers educational opportunities throughout the Oakland area. For adult learners who often balance jobs and families with schoolwork, multiple locations make adult education accessible.

“Part of OACE's mission is to be in multiple neighborhoods in Oakland so that as many people as possible can take advantage of our classes,” Deiro says. “Being located throughout Oakland removes barriers that many of our students face in getting to class ... [and] allows us to tailor the programming to what that community needs.”

OACE partners with other organizations and OUSD sites to offer classes in many different facilities. High schools, libraries, community colleges, job centers and even a mobile RV serve as class sites. While OACE aims to ensure locations are spread out evenly, some facilities are located in close proximity to other supportive services and community resources, as is the case at Eastmont Town Center.

Rosana Covarrubias, community school manager with Bridges Academy at Melrose—one of many sites that hosts OACE Family Literacy classes—says that offering the program at multiple locations throughout Oakland helps ensure there will be room for everyone.

“More classes across schools means more access for people who need it,” she says. “Providing more access in turn gives people more opportunities overall.”

“We are not a school that is stagnant,” Deiro says. “We are always looking for opportunities to serve students where they're at with what they need.”



SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Oakland Adult and Career Education can get you where you want to be.

Oakland Adult and Career Education is open to anyone, regardless of where they're starting. Class offerings include high school diploma and equivalency (GED/HiSET), ESL, citizenship pathways, career training, family literacy and college readiness courses.

OACE is headquartered at Parker Community Resource Center, located at **7929 Ney Avenue** in Oakland, and offers classes at sites throughout the city. For more information on how OACE can help you, call **510-879-1400** or visit **www.ousd.org/adult-and-career-education**.

الدعم والتوجيه والفرص

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للبالغين أبوابه للجميع، Oakland Adult and Career Education بغض النظر عن نقطة البداية. تشمل الدورات الدراسية المتوفرة شهادة ودورات اللغة الإنجليزية (GED/HiSET)، الثانوية العامة وما يعادلها كلفة ثانية، ومسارات المواطنة، والتدريب المهني، ومحو الأمية الأسرية ودورات الاستعداد للكلية.

للبالغين في مركز باركر للموارد المجتمعية، الواقع **OACE** يقع المقر الر في أوكلاند، ويقدم دروساً في مواقع **7929 Ney Avenue** في مختلفة في جميع أنحاء المدينة. لمزيد من المعلومات حول كيفية مساعدة مركز أوكلاند للتعليم والوظائف للبالغين لك، يرجى الاتصال بالرقم **510-879-1400** أو زيارة الموقع الإلكتروني **www.ousd.org/adult-and-career-education**