

Adult Basic Education/English as a Second Language

Program Details

Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) are provided by community and technical colleges and, to a lesser extent, community-based organizations. Among the ABE/ESL students included in this report, 92.5 percent received their training at community and technical colleges and 7.5 percent received training at community based organizations. This report is limited to adults who identified employment-related reasons for enrolling in basic skills courses and who proceeded to take only basic skills courses.¹ Those who took basic skills courses for non-employment-related reasons are not included.

ABE/ESL includes courses in the following skills.

- ABE provides remediation and employment and college readiness skills in reading, writing, and mathematics for adults whose skills are at, or below, the eighth grade level; GED Test Preparation in basic academic skills beyond ABE for those students whose goal is to pass the high school equivalency examination; and High School Completion instruction for adults who want to earn an adult high school diploma; and Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)² for those transitioning into professional technical/academic certificate and degree programs.
- ESL provides basic skills instruction and non-transfer level instruction across a wide range of competency levels in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Every two years, the Workforce Board measures the performance of key workforce programs. In this report, you'll find out more about the program and who is served, the metrics used to measure performance and how the program performed.

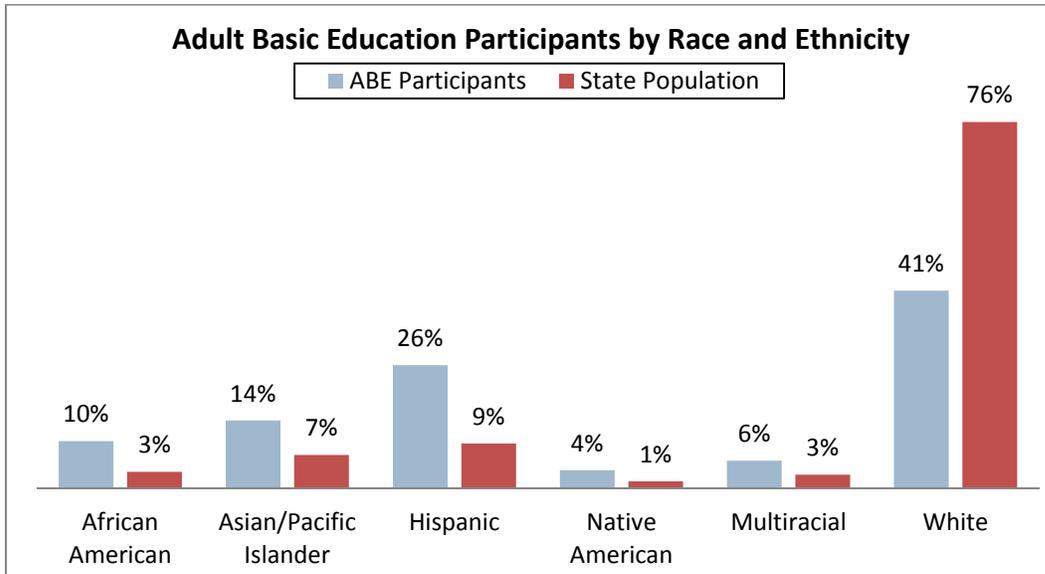
Participant Profile

For this report, researchers studied the results of 12,540 participants who left an ABE/ESL program during the 2007-2008 school year. ABE/ESL serves the most racially and ethnically diverse group of participants of any of the workforce development programs included in this report. Non-whites comprised 59 percent of the

¹ Individuals who took vocational courses in addition to basic skills are included in the chapter on CTC Job Preparatory training. This chapter does, however, present net impact estimates for concurrent basic skills and job preparatory training.

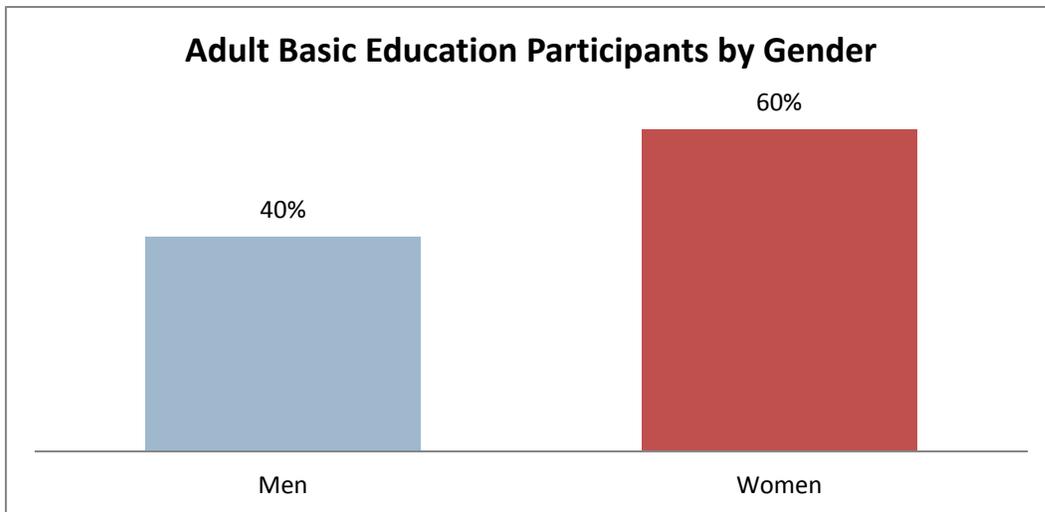
² For information on net benefits of I-BEST on participants' employment and earnings, turn to page 14 in this report.

participants. This is somewhat higher than the 56 percent from the 2005-2006 report.³ The percentage of ABE/ESL participants who are an ethnic/racial minority (59 percent) is significantly higher than the percentage of minorities statewide (23 percent).



Source: Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data 2007-2008.

Around 60 percent of students were female; the same as in 2005-2006.



Source: Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data 2007-2008.

³In this report, unless otherwise stated, racial and ethnic minority groups are mutually exclusive; that is, an individual belongs to one group only. The groups include the following: Hispanics of any race (also referred to as Hispanics); non-Hispanic African Americans (also referred to as African Americans); non-Hispanic Asians/Pacific Islanders (also referred to as Asians/Pacific Islanders); non-Hispanic Native Americans and Alaskan Natives (also referred to as Native Americans); non-Hispanic multiracial (also referred to as multiracial); and non-Hispanic whites (also referred to as whites). According to the 2008 *U.S. Census Estimates*, 77 percent are whites; 3 percent are African Americans; 1 percent are Native Americans; 7 percent are Asians/Pacific Islanders; 3 percent are multiracial; and 9 percent are Hispanics.

The median age when leaving a program was 29 years old. A quarter of participants were over age 38.

State Core Measures: Tracking ABE/ESL Progress

The Workforce Board routinely measures the performance of our state's largest workforce programs. As a customer-focused advocate for Washington's workers and employers, the Workforce Board strives to provide performance accountability, verifying whether worker education and training programs provide a return on investment for participants and taxpayers.

Workforce Training Results seeks answers to five core questions:

- Did participants get the skills they needed?
- Did they get a job and how much were they paid?
- Were employers satisfied with the preparation workers received?⁴
- Has the program made a difference in the participant's success?
- Did participants and the public receive a return on their investment?

Data Comes From State Wage Files, Employer Survey

The 2010 Workforce Training Results includes information obtained from Employment Security Department wage files in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and federal employment records. Data used in the Net Impact Study also reached back to 2006-2007 employment records, to help assess trends over a slightly longer time frame. Employer satisfaction was assessed through the Workforce Board's 2010 Employer Survey responses from 291 firms that hired new employees who recently received ABE/ESL instruction.

Net Impact Study Adds More Insight Into Program Performance

This year's report includes a comprehensive Net Impact Study. Conducted every four years, this study provides a head-to-head comparison of participants and non-participants to help answer a central question: How much of a workforce participant's success in obtaining a job, or a higher wage, is due to the workforce program? By comparing program participants with similar individuals who did not participate in a workforce training program, the Net Impact Study indicates whether employment and earnings gains are due to the workforce program, or if workers could have made this progress on their own. This research also allows for a more detailed analysis as to whether the participant and the public received a return on their investment in the program.

⁴ Workforce Training Results usually includes a survey that measures the satisfaction of workforce participants, in addition to employers. The survey was not conducted this time because of budget constraints.

Did Participants Have a Job and How Much Were They Paid?

To find out whether participants had jobs and how much they earned, participant records were matched with Employment Security Department wage files from Washington and neighboring states.⁵

According to record matches, 55 percent of ABE/ESL students had employment during the third quarter after they left the program, three percentage points lower than reported in 2005-2006. Their median hourly wage⁶ was slightly higher than two years ago. However, the median post-program annualized earnings were slightly lower, indicating they were working fewer hours each quarter.⁷ Since 1997, findings indicate that employment rates and earnings have not improved, and have even declined.

Turn to page 13 for the Net Impact Study. Conducted every four years, this in-depth report adds extra value to the 2010 Workforce Training Results. The study provides a side-by-side comparison of participants vs. similar non-participants, answering the question of whether the program is making a difference.

2007-2008 Program Year Performance for ABE/ESL

Performance Measure	Results
Employment Rate*	55%
Percentage Employed Full Time**	53%
Median Annualized Earnings	\$17,186
Median Hourly Wage***	\$11.07
Hours Worked Quarterly (Median)	402 hours

These figures apply to those with employment reported to Employment Security Department six to nine months after leaving program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent. **Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week. * Earnings /wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars.*

⁵ These files contain quarterly earnings and hours worked information on those individuals with employment reported for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits purposes (approximately 90 percent of in-state employment, with self-employment, active duty military, and those working for religious nonprofit organizations being the major groups of employers not included).

⁶ All wages and earnings are stated in 2009 Q1 dollars.

⁷ To derive annualized earnings, third quarter earnings are multiplied by four. Quarterly earnings are the result of hourly wage rates and the number of hours worked in a calendar quarter.

To put earnings in context, the median number of dependents ABE/ESL participants were able to support at poverty level after leaving the program in 2007-2008 was 2.7 people. At the 200 percent poverty level, it was less than one person (.8 people).⁸

Self Sufficiency Level for ABE/ESL – Previous Years

Performance Measure	1997-1998	1999-2000	2001-2002	2003-2004	2005-2006	2007-2008
Household size-poverty level	3.1	3	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7
Household size-poverty level at 200 percent	.9	.8	.8	.8	.8	.8

The next table shows employment and earnings over the course of six study periods.

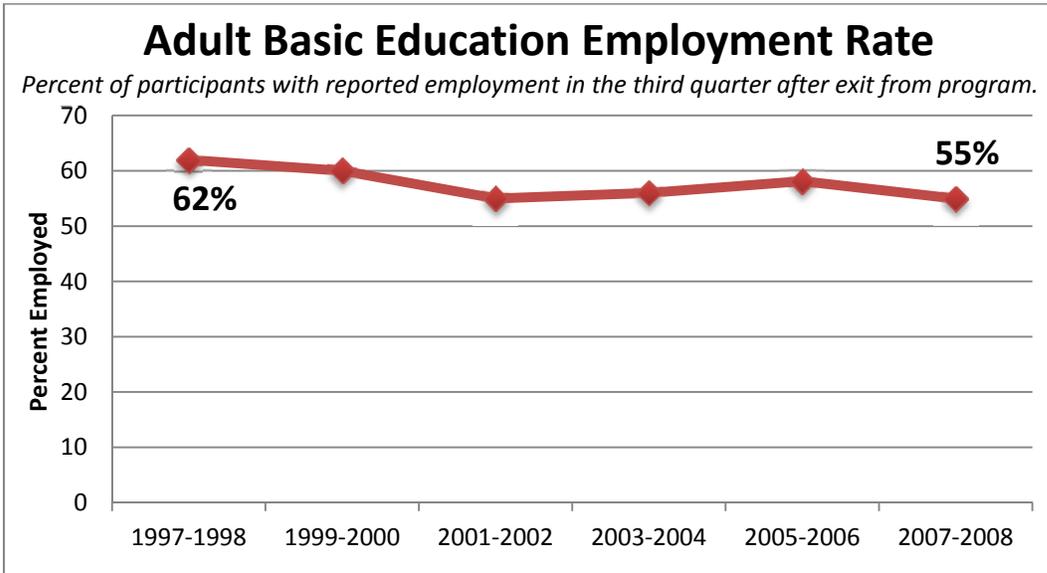
Program Performance for ABE/ESL – Previous Years

Performance Measure	1997-1998	1999-2000	2001-2002	2003-2004	2005-2006	2007-2008
Employment Rate	62%	60 %	55%	56%	58%	55%
Percentage Employed Full Time*	57%	57%	54%	54%	54%	53%
Median Annualized Earnings	\$18,850	\$18,211	\$17,404	\$16,843	\$17,607	\$17,186
Median Hourly Wage	\$10.61	\$11.00	\$10.60	\$10.69	\$10.75	\$11.07
Median Hours Worked Quarterly	452	433	419	412	420	402

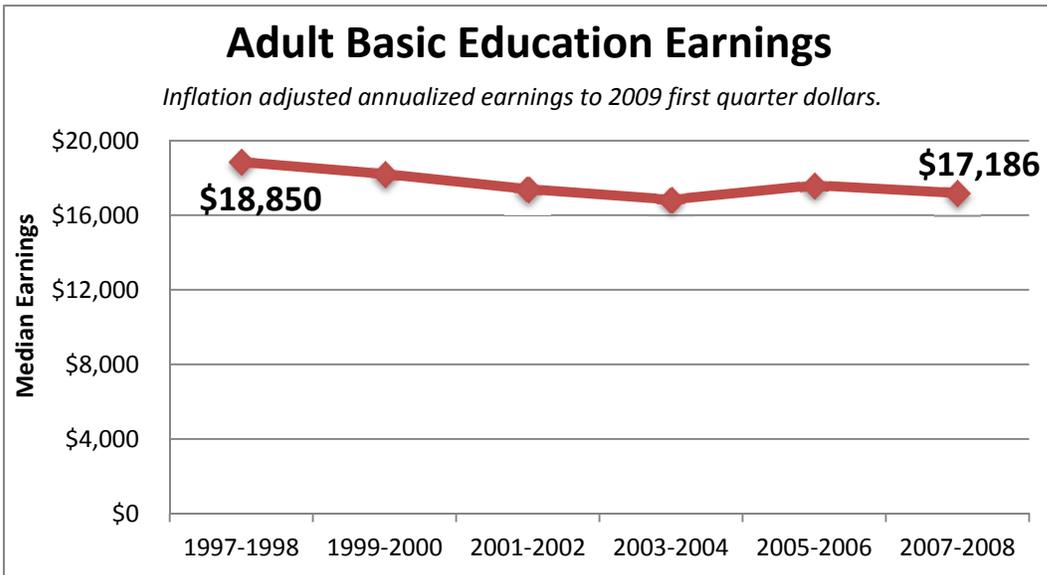
**Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week. **Note: These figures apply to those with employment reported to state employment agencies six to nine months after leaving the program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent. Earnings /wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to control for inflation.*

⁸ In 2009, the poverty level for one person was \$10,830 per year. The 200-percent-poverty level that year was \$21,660 for one person.

Since 1997, ABE/ESL participants who did not enroll in vocational training have experienced falling earnings and employment levels.



Source: Workforce Training Results 1997-2008.



Source: Workforce Training Results 1997-2008.

Employment among ABE/ESL students is heavily concentrated in services, retail trade, and manufacturing industries. The percentage of 2007-2008 participants employed in those industries is almost the same as in 2005-2006 for retail trade (especially accommodation and food services) and slightly higher for services and manufacturing.

ABE Employment by Industry	
Industry Group	Employment
Services (see breakout below)	55.2%
Retail Trade	14.2%
Manufacturing	11.5%
Construction	5.1%
Natural Resources and Mining	4.1%
Financial Activities	2.6%
Wholesale Trade	2.6%
Transportation and Warehouse and Utilities	2.3%
Public Administration	2.0%
Information	0.4%
Breakout of the Services Industry	
	Employment
Accommodation and Food Services	17.9%
Administration and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	10.3%
Social Assistance	9.8%
All Other Services	6.0%
Health Care	4.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2.9%
Education Services	2.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical	1.3%
Subtotal from Services Industry	55.2%

*Note: Industry groups based on North American Industry Classification System codes.
Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data in third quarter after exiting program.*

Wages and Employment Results Vary by Population

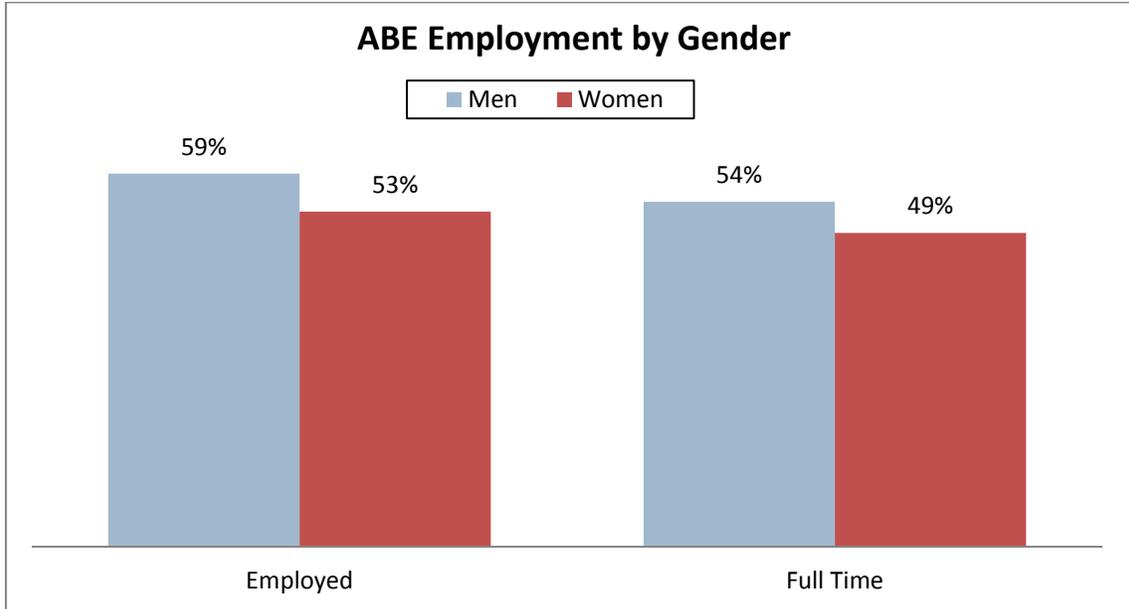
Wage and employment results can vary by gender, race and ethnicity, and disability. Among students employed during the third quarter after exit, there is a substantial gender gap in labor market outcomes. Employment rates, hours worked, earnings, and

Gender Differences in Labor Market Outcomes Among ABE/ESL Students in the Third Quarter After Leaving Program			
	Women	Men	Ratio
Employment Reported to ESD	53%	59%	90%
Median Quarterly Hours Worked	387	428	90%
Median Annual Earnings	\$15,869	\$19,901	80%
Median Hourly Wage	\$10.50	\$12.09	87%

wages are significantly lower for women, although the ratio has slightly improved from 2005-2006.

Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data 2007-2008.

The following chart shows the percentage of men and women ABE/ESL participants who were reported to be employed. Also broken out is what percentage of those working held full-time jobs. Male ABE participants were more likely to be employed and also more likely to be working full-time.

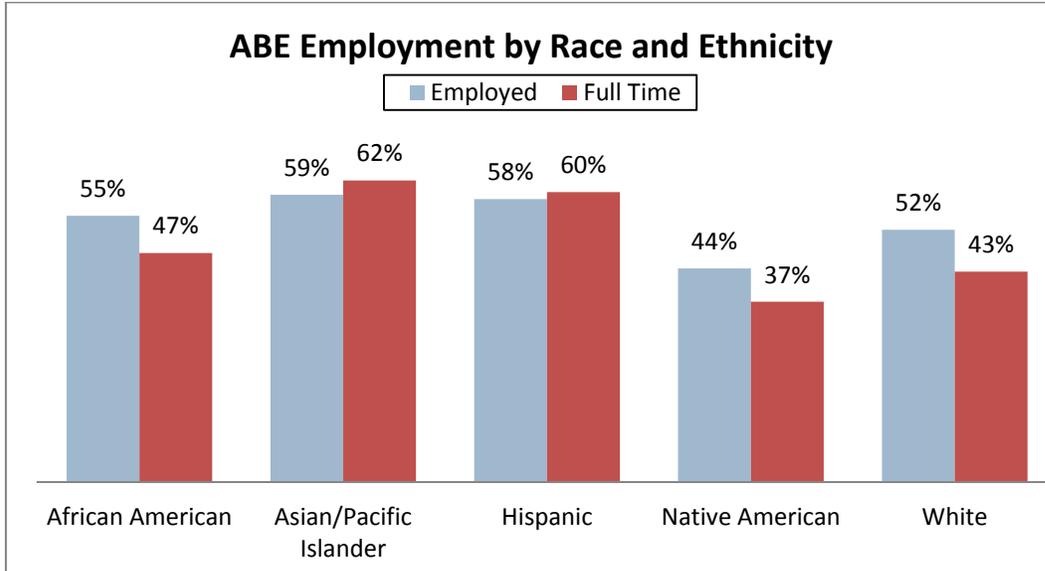


Source: Matches with Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data and Employment Security Department data 2007-2008.

Race/Ethnicity Plays Role

Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islanders and African Americans had a higher employment rate than whites. White ABE/ESL students recorded a 52 percent employment rate, while Hispanics had a 58 percent employment rate, Asians/Pacific Islanders had a 59 percent employment rate and African Americans achieved a 55 percent employment rate. Native American ABE participants had an employment rate of 44 percent. Of those ABE participants who were working, higher percentages of Hispanics (60 percent), Asians/Pacific Islanders (62 percent) and African Americans (47 percent) worked full time compared to whites (43 percent).

Thirty-seven percent of employed Native American ABE participants worked full time. Median hourly wages for Asians/Pacific Islanders, African Americans and Hispanics were slightly higher than hourly wages paid to whites. Hourly wages for Native Americans were slightly lower than hourly wages for whites.

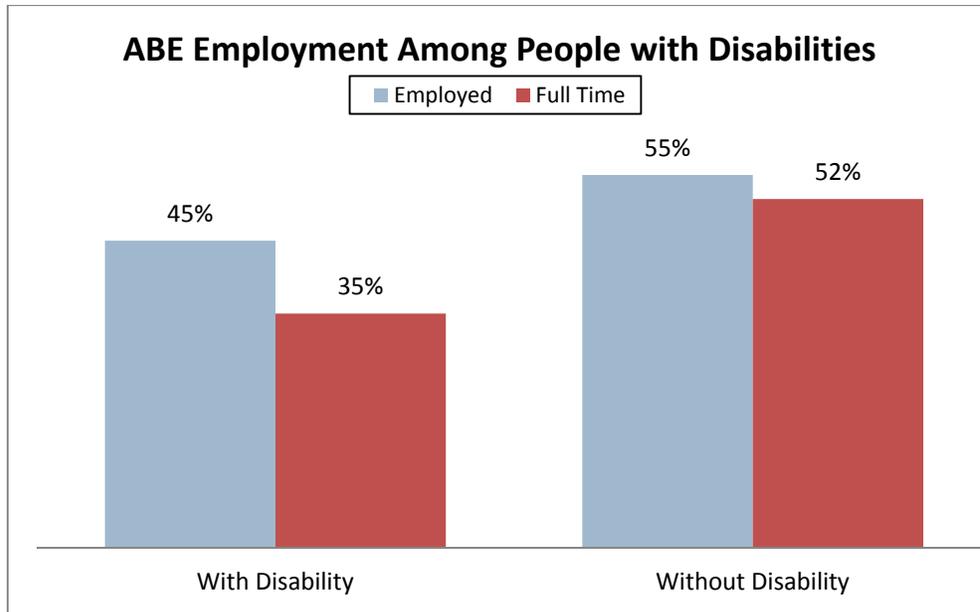


Source: Matches with Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data and Employment Security Department data 2007-2008.

Disability Impacts Employment, Earnings

Just 2 percent of the ABE/ESL students leaving college during 2007-2008 had a disability (less than the general population percentage of 18 percent having a disability).⁹ Students with disabilities did less well in the labor market than other participants. They were less likely to have employment reported to the state’s Employment Security Department (45 percent versus 55 percent for participants without a disability). Even so, employment rates among those with disabilities definitely improved from the 39 percent recorded in 2005-2006. They were less likely to work full time (35 percent versus 52 percent for those without disabilities), and their median hourly wage was 91 percent of the amount earned by students without a disability.

⁹ Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, State Population Survey, 2008.

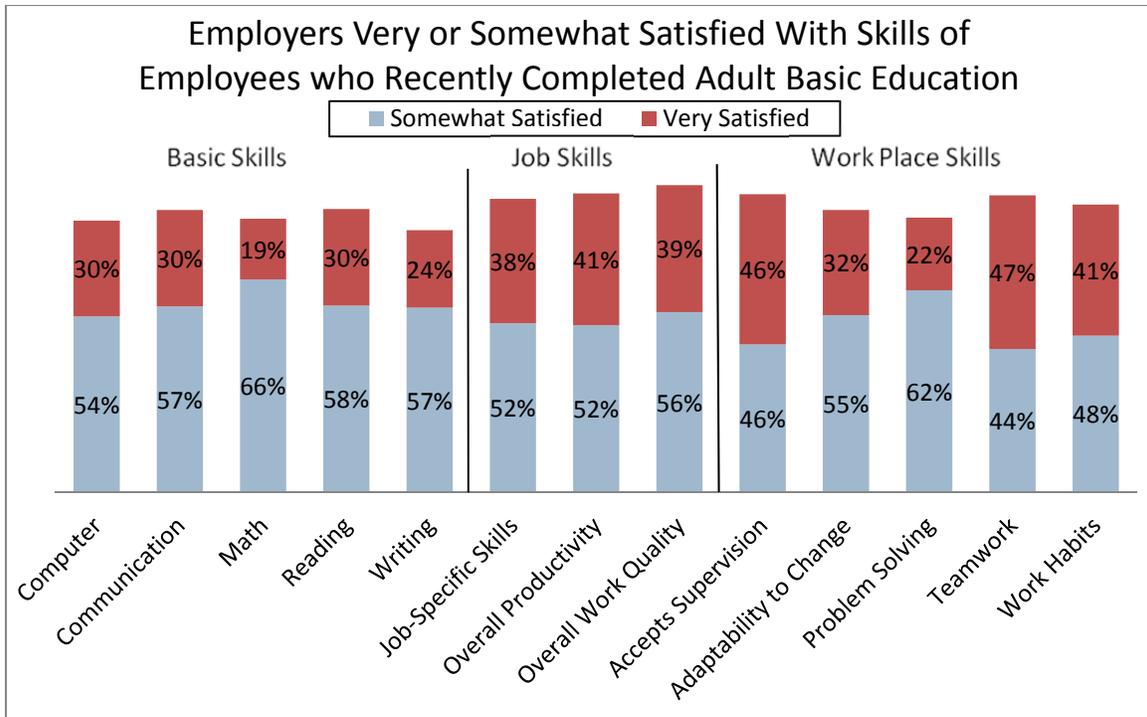


Source: Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data and Employment Security Department data matches 2007-2008.

Were Employers Satisfied with the Preparation Workers Received?

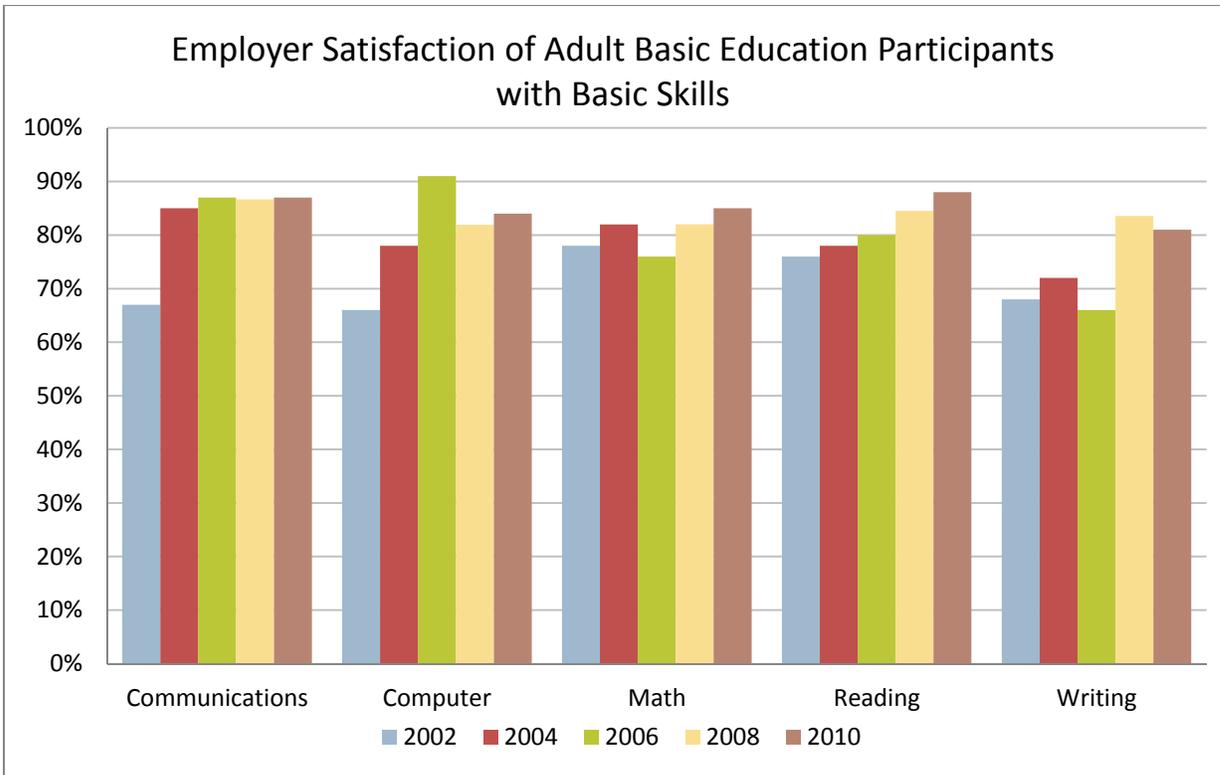
The Workforce Board's Employer Survey, administered during 2010, asked firms to evaluate new employees who had recently completed an ABE/ESL program. Employer satisfaction was broken down into three categories: Basic Skills, Job Skills and Work Place Skills. Basic skills refer to reading, writing, math, communication and computer skills. Job skills refer to skills specific to the job as well as overall work quality and productivity. Work place skills refer to the skills necessary to get along in the workplace such as ability to accept supervision, teamwork, ability to adapt to changing situations, problem solving and overall work habits.

Of the 296 employers surveyed, 95 percent stated they were satisfied with the overall work quality of these new employees of which 39 percent said they were "very satisfied." Employers' levels of satisfaction with various skills of new employees differed somewhat from the previous survey. Much higher percentages were "very satisfied" in all areas, especially with willingness to accept supervision, teamwork, overall work quality and productivity. The lowest percentages of "very satisfied" responses concerned computer, math, writing and reading skills.

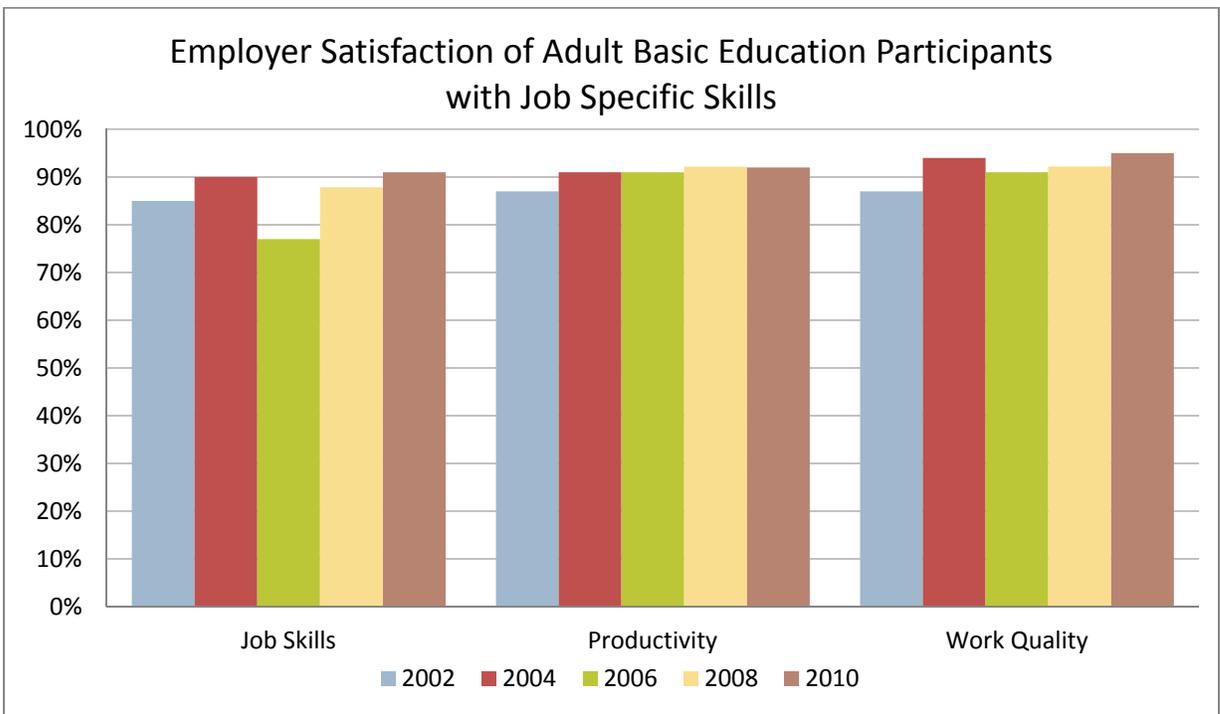


Source: Workforce Board Employer Survey conducted in 2010.

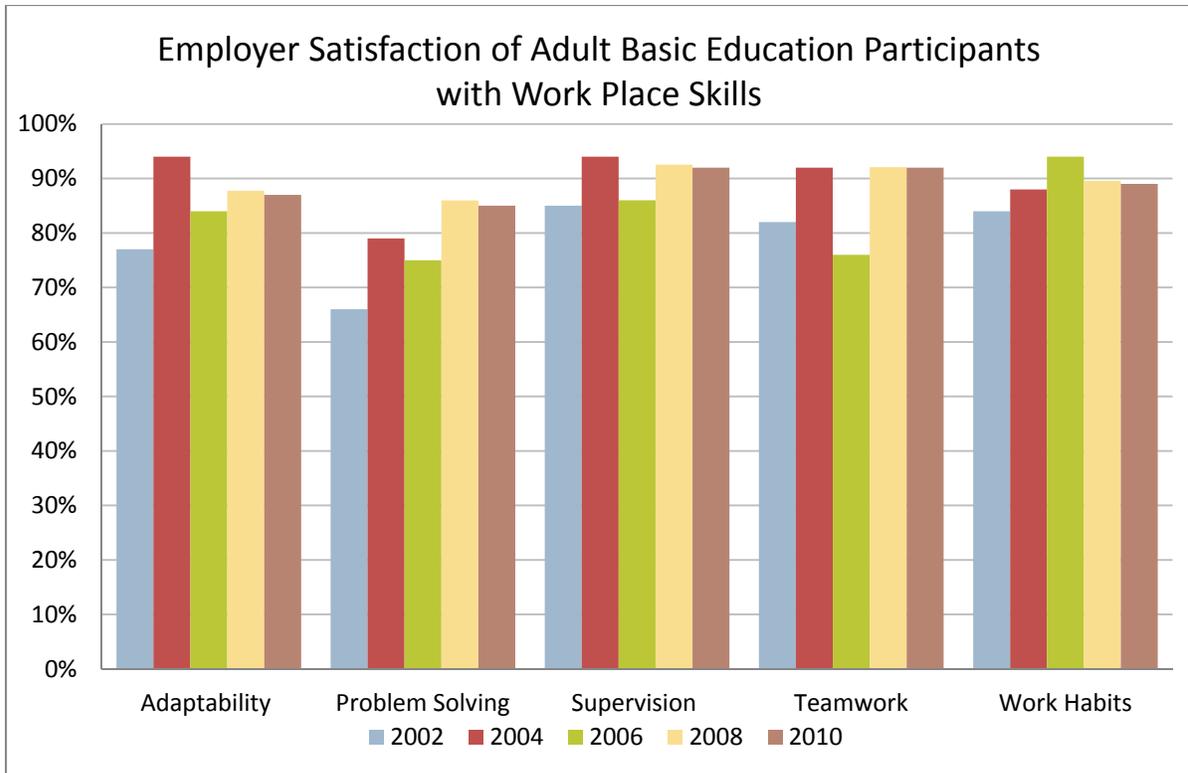
Over the previous 10 years, the employers' overall satisfaction with skills has varied depending on the type of skill. The following charts show the satisfaction of employers with work related skills and basic skills of new employees who recently completed an ABE/ESL program. There has been a general improvement in employer satisfaction.



Source: Workforce Board's biennial Employer Surveys from 2002 through 2010.



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Net Impact - Did Program Make a Difference in Participant Success

Every four years the Workforce Board conducts net impact and cost-benefit analyses of workforce development programs. This detailed study compares participants and non-participants. The net impact part of this study attempts to measure whether the program made a difference in the participant's success. Washington is the only state to periodically conduct rigorous net impact evaluations of its workforce programs.

The Adult Basic Education program has positive net impacts on annualized earnings.

The net impact analysis was conducted by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Upjohn), a national leader in evaluating training programs. To do the analysis, Upjohn studied program participants to see what results they achieved and compared these results with a control group. Individuals who participated in a WIA Adult program were compared to individuals who had similar demographic characteristics, but who did not participate in any of the programs included in the study. The comparison group members were selected from among those who registered with WorkSource, Washington's one-stop career center system.

The most recent analyses examined the experience of participants who left programs during the 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 program years.

Short-term net impacts: Individuals who exited in Program Year 2007-2008.

Longer-term net impacts: Individuals who exited in Program Year 2005-2006.

To estimate these impacts, individuals who received employment-related ABE/ESL education were compared to individuals who had similar characteristics, but who did not participate in any of the programs included in the study.¹⁰ Additional estimates were made for a cohort of ABE/ESL students who also participated in CTC Job Preparatory training.

The comparison group members were selected from registrants to the state’s employment service. *Short-term* net impacts were derived by examining outcomes for individuals who exited the programs (or from the employment service) in fiscal year 2007-2008 and *longer-term* impacts for individuals who exited in fiscal year 2005-2006.

Impact on Employment and Earnings: Participants vs. Control Group

ABE/ESL Participants	Short-term	Long-term
Net Employment Impact	No significant positive impact	No significant positive impact
Net Hourly Wage Impact	No significant positive impact	No significant positive impact
Net Hours Employed per Quarter Impact	15.4	15.1
Annualized Earnings	\$922	\$830

Dollars listed are the average annual earnings difference between ABE participants who got jobs and those in a control group who were employed. Earnings and wages are in 2009 Q1 dollars.

As can be seen above, Adult Basic Education participants worked more hours per quarter than non-participants in the control group. They also notched higher annualized earnings than those who did not participate. However, the program did not have a significant positive impact on employment and hourly wages.

I-BEST Makes Significant Difference for Participants

However, when job skills-training was blended with basic skills training, participants’ employment and earnings improved significantly. I-BEST, which stands for Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training, pairs workforce training with ABE or ESL so students learn literacy and workplace skills at the same time. It is a nationally

¹⁰ That is, individuals who enrolled in ABE/ESL programs for personal enhancement or non-employment-related purposes are not included in the ABE/ESL cohort.

recognized model that is helping a growing number of low-skilled workers gain college-level credentials.

Impact on Employment and Earnings: Participants vs. Control Group

I-BEST Participants	Short-term*
Net Employment Impact	3.9 percentage points
Net Hourly Wage Impact	\$1.23
Net Hours Employed per Quarter Impact	35.3
Annualized Earnings	\$2,310

Dollars listed are the average annual earnings difference between I-BEST participants who got jobs and those in a control group who were employed. Earnings and wages are in 2009 Q1 dollars.

*Long-term results are not yet available as the program started in 2006.