



MEETING THE NEED?

English Language Learners and Immigrant Adult Learners in the Illinois Adult Education System



ICIRR

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

A report issued by the Illinois Coalition
for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Report prepared by

Rob Paral and Associates

Research and evaluation for family and community development

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This report was underwritten through the generous support of the Joyce Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services, with the cooperation of the Illinois Community College Board.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Immigrants are a growing part of Illinois' population, and a growing part of the population needing adult education programs. Enabling immigrants to gain English proficiency and other basic education is crucial to our state's prosperity and economic competitiveness. This report lays out the key facts that should inform how our adult education system can best address the needs of immigrant learners. The report describes the major characteristics of two groups:

- Immigrants likely to benefit from adult basic education ("ABE") – immigrants without a high school degree or GED; and
- English-language learners ("ELLs") – persons who do not speak English well.

Population Size and Change

Illinois is home to approximately **477,000 potential immigrant adult learners**—immigrants who have not completed high school and could benefit from ABE. Our state is also home to more than 558,000 English language learners.

Immigrants make up **36 percent of all adult learners**, compared to 31 percent as of 2000.

Key Characteristics

ELLs and immigrant adult learners affect a different set of community college districts than native-born adults in need of ABE: **More than half of ELLs and immigrant**

adult learners live in the Chicago suburbs, compared to only 28 percent of native-born adult learners.

ELLs and immigrant adult learners have substantially different educational profiles than other adult learners: **About a third of ELLs and half of immigrant adult learners have completed six or fewer grades**, compared to 10 percent of native-born adult learners.

ELLs and immigrant adult learners have a higher economic profile than comparable natives: **Household incomes are 60 percent higher for ELLs and 72 percent higher for immigrant adult learners than for native-born adult learners.**

Households of the ELLs and immigrant adult learners include small children: **ELLs and immigrant adult learners are twice as likely as comparable natives to have children aged six or younger.**

Focus on English-Language Learners

ELLs with particularly low levels of English are more likely to live in Chicago, are more likely to be Latino, and have substantially lower levels of formal education.

Moving up even one level of English provides substantial economic payoff: **Persons who speak English "not well" are measurably better off than those with no English ability.** Their household incomes are 28 percent higher, and their poverty rate is 8 points lower than persons with no English ability.

Focus on Immigrant Adult Learners

Among immigrant adult learners, **those with higher levels of education tend to reside in the Chicago suburbs**; Latinos predominate among all educational levels.

Incremental educational gains lead to clear economic gain: Among immigrant adult learners, **those with at least ten grades of education have household incomes 13 percent higher than persons with seven to nine grades of education**.

Need and Service among Community College Districts

English language need

Statewide, only about **16 percent of potential ELL need is being met**.

The community college districts with the highest levels of need for ELL instruction are Chicago (252,529 persons), DuPage (39,840), Lake County (36,808), Harper (32,726) and Elgin (27,905).

Harper College served approximately 26 percent of the ELL need in its district – the highest rate of met need among districts with large ELL populations; Triton and Waubesa met close to 20 percent of need.

ABE need: Latinos

Statewide, only **1 percent of potential ABE need of Latinos is being met**. For the Latino population, the percentage of need met was highest in Southeastern (11.1 percent), Kankakee (9.3), Richland (7.1), Kishwaukee (4.9) and Highland (4.2).

ABE need: Asians

Statewide, only **2 percent of potential ABE need of Asians is being met**. For Asians, the percentage of need that was met was highest in Rock Valley (14.4 percent), Heartland (10.7), Kankakee (7.8), Illinois Valley (7.4) and Lincoln Land (6.8).

Recommendations

Government, the private sector, and the community at large all have a stake in seeing our state's adult education system meet the demand for English and ABE instruction. Our state government and adult education programs need to take several major steps to ensure that immigrants fulfill their potential.

State of Illinois

State lawmakers need to continue and indeed **increase their support for English and ABE instruction**, viewing such support as **investment in our state's workforce** that will provide rich dividends for our state's economy. Policymakers should see adult education instruction as increasingly meeting two major interests of our state: increased workforce productivity and competitiveness and integration of immigrants into the social and economic fabric of the state.

In addition, **state funding streams for English and ABE instruction should be adjusted to better reflect the geographic and demographic shifts** in where immigrant learners are residing, and where the need for instruction lies. The growth and concentration of immigrant adult learners and ELLs in the Chicago suburbs, which until recently had not received significant numbers of immigrants, calls for appropriate funding levels that would enable programs in those areas to meet their growing potential needs for English and ABE programming. Illinois has already authorized a **We Want to Learn English Initiative** that would devote \$15 million, through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), to reaching immigrant learners in their communities; the state should fully fund and implement this initiative.

Finally, given the importance of immigrants to our state's economy and workforce, the state should **better integrate its English and adult education systems with workforce training and other state initiatives**. ICCB should be working collaboratively with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and other agencies to move learners seamlessly toward better jobs and better opportunities.

Adult education programs

Adult education programs themselves also need to adjust to the demographic changes in their districts. **More classes for English language learners** are a given, due to the continuing arrival of newcomers in areas that had not previously been home to significant numbers of foreign-born persons.

Immigrants are a growing portion of adult learners, and their levels of formal education are lower, on average, than those of native-born adult learners. The wide diversity of educational level among English language learners makes it critical that instruction **address each level of learner with appropriate curricula and teaching techniques**. In particular, programs should **focus on lower-level immigrant learners**, who would

gain substantially and contribute even more to our economy when they improve their English skills and educational attainment.

Immigrant learners are also more likely to work and to have small children in their households, making scheduling difficult. These trends call for **flexible class times, supportive services such as child care, and cultural competency**, particularly for Latino learners, among adult education programs.

Finally, while community colleges tend to be the largest institutions serving each college district, the large size of the immigrant population needing ELL and ABE programs means that the burden of satisfying demand should not lie solely with those colleges. Community-

based organizations play an important role in providing ELL and ABE classes, and are often able to reach immigrants in the community and provide supportive services. **Increasing the amount of services offered through community organizations and building partnerships among these programs and community colleges** is crucial to meeting the need.

2 INTRODUCTION



Immigrants are critical to any effort to improve the Illinois labor force. A 2006 report by ICIRR revealed that without immigration the state's labor force would have contracted during the first portion of the last decade.¹ Immigration allows the labor force to grow and remain competitive, and immigrants are more than one in six workers in Illinois.

Community colleges and other adult education institutions are positioned to give workers access to living-wage jobs, as highlighted in a recent report by the Washington, DC-based Workforce Alliance.² Yet the need for offerings in adult basic education (ABE) is shifting, with immigrants representing a growing portion of persons in need of that instruction. At the same time, the population of English-language learners (ELLs), who are traditionally served through the adult education system, is expanding.

The growing presence of immigrants and ELLs within the population raises critical questions for the adult education system. Community colleges and other institutions are faced with the need to both adjust and increase courses to bring them into line with the emerging demographic reality.

In this report we seek to highlight key aspects of ELLs and immigrant adult learners in Illinois. We also profile the native-born population in Illinois in need of ABE. These communities have particular features that the adult education system must address as it strives to fulfill its mandate to improve the skills and opportunities of Illinois workers.

We define ELLs as adults reporting to the American Community Survey that they do not speak English well, and we define adult learners as those who have not earned a high school diploma or GED. We break out immigrants and natives from our descriptions of the population in need of ABE because, as will be seen, the characteristics of foreign- and native-born are quite different. We also focus on persons who are not currently enrolled in school, as a way of bringing attention to persons who would benefit from services but are not getting them³.

¹ ICIRR 2006 *Illinois Immigrants: Fueling Prosperity in a Changing Economy* (Chicago: Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights)

² Holzer and Lerman 2007 *America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Education and Training Requirements in the Next Decade and Beyond* Washington, DC: Skills2Compete, at http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports/americasforgottenmiddleskilljobs_2007-11.pdf

³ Our graphs and charts in this report are based on ELLs and adult learners who are not currently enrolled in school. This definition eliminates students in high schools, which they may attend in Illinois up to age 21.

Notes on Terms and Methodology

English-language learners (ELLs): Persons aged 18 years or more who are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as not speaking English “well” or not speaking English “at all.”

Adult learners: Individuals aged 18 years or more who are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as not having attained a high school diploma.

Immigrant adult learners: Foreign-born persons aged 18 years or more who are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as not having attained a high school diploma.

Native-born adult learners: Native-born persons aged 18 years or more who are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as not having attained a high school diploma.

Sources of data: Information on the characteristics of ELLs and both immigrants and native adult learners are derived from the 2000 Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). Unless designated as representing year 2000, data are from the ACS for years 2005-2008 and represent an average for that time period. Reports from the Illinois Community College Board are the source of information on the number of students served in Illinois community colleges and other institutions funded by ICCB.

Geography: “Collar counties” referred to in this report include DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will.

3 CURRENT SIZE AND RECENT CHANGE OF THE POPULATIONS NEEDING ELL AND ABE CLASSES



Hundreds of thousands of persons potentially need ELL and ABE classes

In Illinois during the 2005-2008 period, there were 1,323,905 adults who did not have a high school degree and were not enrolled in school. Of these, 845,985 were native-born and 477,920 were immigrants. During the same period there were 558,560 adults who did not speak English well and were not enrolled in a school. These populations represent the potential universe of unmet need for ABE and ELL services in the state.

Adults without High School Diplomas in Illinois: 2005-2008

	Not in School	In School	Total
Total	1,323,905	103,812	1,427,717
Native Born	845,985	88,676	934,661
Foreign Born	477,920	15,136	493,056

Source: American Community Survey

Adults Who Do Not Speak English Well in Illinois: 2005-2008

Not in School	In School
558,560	16,783

Source: American Community Survey

Not all ELLs and adult learners are seeking instruction in adult education institutions, but it is instructive to compare the potential need for services against the current offerings of the system. Of 1.6 million persons needing ELL or ABE classes (including immigrants and natives), the Illinois adult education system served about 90,000 persons in English classes and 30,000 persons in ABE instruction in 2009.

What role do immigrants play in the need for English and ABE instruction?

Understanding the increasing role that immigrants play in the need for ABE and English instruction begins with recognizing the great strides made by the U.S. over the last half century in raising education levels. In Illinois, for example, only about a third of residents had a high school education in 1950, but five decades later the graduation rate exceeded 85 percent. Moving so many adults past high school was a major achievement for the post-war American educational systems.

Along with the strides in educational attainment, another phenomenon defines the U.S. in recent decades. Since the 1960s, the nation (and Illinois) has experienced large-scale immigration. Recent immigrants have a well-documented “bi-modal” educational pattern,

meaning they contribute disproportionately to both the low- and high-end of the educational spectrum. For example, in Illinois, 30 percent of current immigrants have less than a high school education, but 28 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

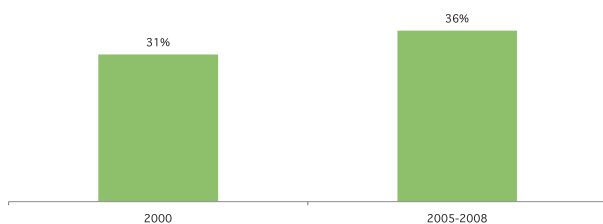
Historically, immigration contributes about 35,000 persons annually to the population in Illinois; during the 1990s, the annual arrivals exceeded 50,000. As a result of the large number of new immigrants, including many persons with relatively low levels of education, immigrants are 36 percent of persons without a high school education, despite being only 17 percent of the adult population.

Many immigrants, of course, come from non-English speaking countries and have to learn English after arrival in the United States. These English language learners themselves include persons of both relatively high and low levels of formal education. Illinois' large immigrant population, including many who arrived in recent years, translates into a substantial population of English language learners.

Immigrants are a growing portion of the need for adult education

The strides made in improving the education of Illinois adults, combined with the arrival of new immigrant populations, has led to immigrants and ELLs becoming a large portion of the need for services within the adult education system. A feature of this dynamic is how fast it is taking place. In just the last half dozen years, immigrants have gone from being 31 percent to 36 percent of all Illinoisans who had not completed high school (and who therefore need ABE). This change is accelerated by the fact that many natives who have not completed high school are relatively older (median age: 52), and their numbers are falling due to mortality.

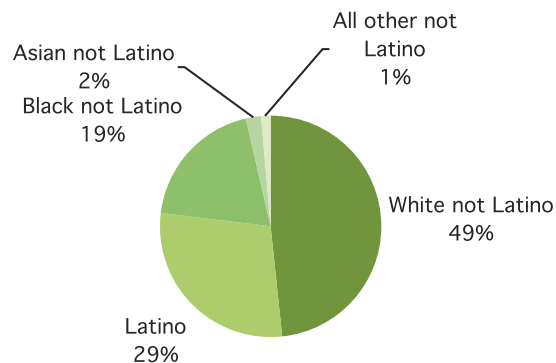
Foreign Born Percent of Persons without High School Education



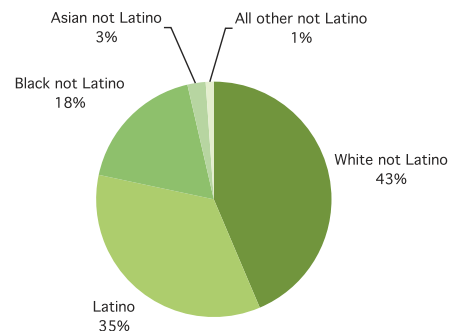
The population of adult learners is becoming relatively more foreign-born, but its racial/ethnic identity is changing, too. In 2000, White Non-Latinos were 49 percent of adult learners, but during the 2005-2008 period White Non-Latinos were only 44 percent. During

the same period, Latinos rose from 28 percent of the population to 35 percent.

Race/Ethnicity of Adult Learners: 2000



Race/Ethnicity of Adult Learners: 2005 - 2008



Discussion

The large number of persons who potentially need ABE and English language classes raises important issues. The scope of the need far exceeds the capacity of the adult education system, but the fact remains that Illinois would benefit from more of its adults returning for education.

With regard to the limited English population and to immigrants in particular, what's at stake for Illinois is that it is a leading port of entry for a nation that has been experiencing historic levels of immigration. As such, the state has to rise to the demands of its role as a home to new Americans. Ideally, this would take place in a context of seeing immigrants as assets whose contributions will rise as their language ability and education level improves. Meeting this challenge requires identifying the specific characteristics and needs of these populations and using this information to respond effectively. The next section of this report will describe these key characteristics in greater detail.

4 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ELLS AND IMMIGRANT ADULT LEARNERS



Today's English language learners and immigrant adult learners have unique characteristics that set them apart from native-born adult learners. ELLs and immigrants in general have different residential patterns, race, education, household characteristics, and income and labor force trends.

ELLs and immigrant adult learners affect a different set of community college districts than other adult learners

During much of the last half century, immigration to the United States has been dominated by immigration to the larger cities of the nation, such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Houston. The legacy of those trends lives on in the large immigrant settlement areas found across much of the city of Chicago.

But the last twenty years have seen remarkable shifts in the destinations of new migrants to the U.S.⁴ Increasingly, suburban, exurban and rural areas are the loci of the new immigration. While the immigrants

and refugees who arrived in Illinois during the 70s and 80s were likely to live in the city, the 1990 census found for the first time that slightly more than half of Illinois immigrants lived outside Chicago.

That continuing trend is reflected in settlement patterns of ELLs and immigrant adult learners. At least half of both groups live in the suburban portion of metro Chicago, with a quarter of each population in suburban Cook and a quarter in seven counties outside of Cook. In contrast, nearly half of native-born adult learners are in 94 downstate counties in Illinois.

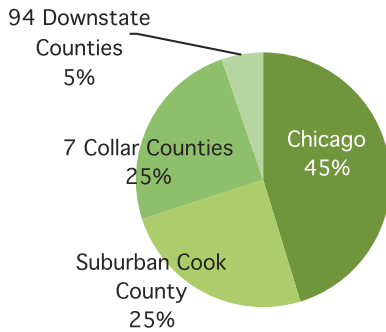
The story of ELLs and immigrants in the suburbs is also a story about the institutions that serve those suburban communities and their need to adapt to and serve the newcomers that are accounting for growing portions of the suburban population. Community colleges such as Morton College in Cicero, Harper College in Palatine, and Joliet Junior College have seen rapid growth and new kinds of need among the areas they serve. Indeed, those colleges have experienced immigration for some decades now. Other colleges seeing dramatic increases in newcomers, given their position on the fast-growing edges of metro Chicago,

⁴ Singer 2008 *Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrant Incorporation in Suburban America* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press

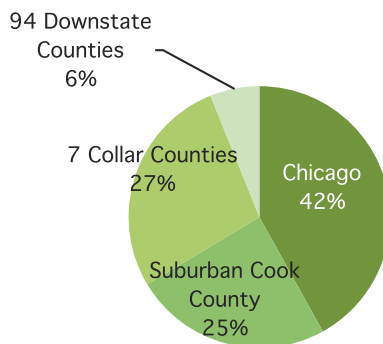
include McHenry County College and Waubesa College in the Aurora area.

In contrast, the native population that lacks a high school degree has a strikingly different residential pattern than the ELLs and the foreign born. Nearly half of the natives live in so-called downstate counties outside the metro Chicago area.

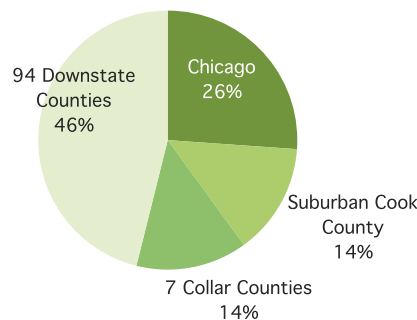
Place of Residence of English Language Learners



Place of Residence of Immigrant Adult Learners



Place of Residence of Native-Born Adult Learners

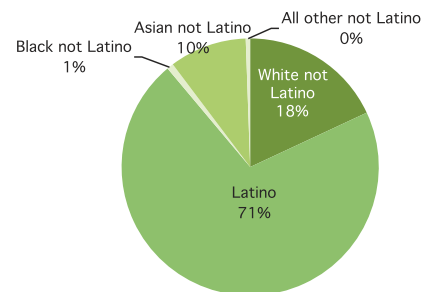


Latinos predominate among ELLs and immigrant adult learners

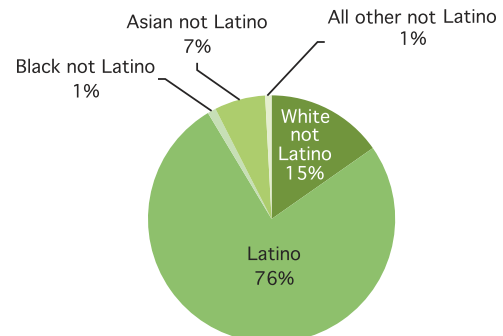
Illinois is a state that reflects average national trends across many indicators such as labor force composition, unemployment rates, and education levels. The state is also a representative location in terms of its immigrant population, being home to diverse types of immigrants (including refugees, legal permanent immigrants, temporary immigrants and the undocumented) and receiving immigrants from all major sending regions: Latin America, Asia, and Europe.

As with the nation, a growing portion of immigrants to Illinois over recent decades have come from Latin America and particularly from Mexico. Immigrants from Mexico have relatively lower rates of English acquisition and educational attainment. The combination of these characteristics and their significant representation among new arrivals means that Latinos predominate among ELLs and immigrant adult learners in Illinois. Latinos are 71 percent of ELLs and 76 percent of immigrant adult learners. In marked contrast, native-born adult learners are only 10 percent Latino.

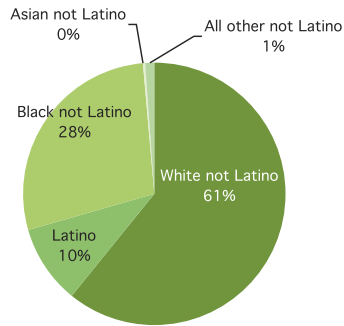
Race/Ethnicity of English Language Learners



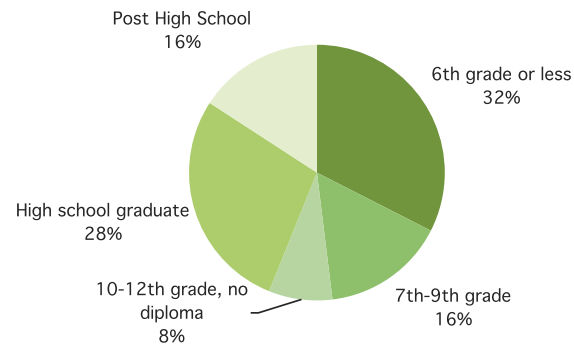
Race/Ethnicity of Immigrant Adult Learners



Race/Ethnicity of Native-Born Adult Learners



Educational Attainment of English Language Learners



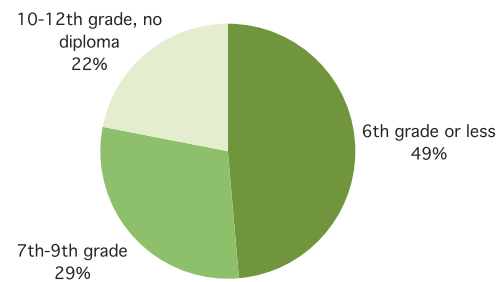
ELLs and immigrant adult learners have substantially different educational profiles than other adult learners

Two facts about immigration in Illinois bear significantly on the educational levels of ELLs and immigrant adult learners. The first has to do with, as noted earlier, the presence of a large Mexican cohort. More than 40 percent of immigrants to Illinois were born in Mexico, and 53.1 percent of them lack a high school degree, compared to 14.7 percent of other immigrants and 11.6 percent of natives. More than a quarter (28.2 percent) of Mexican-born adults in Illinois have not attended school past the sixth grade.

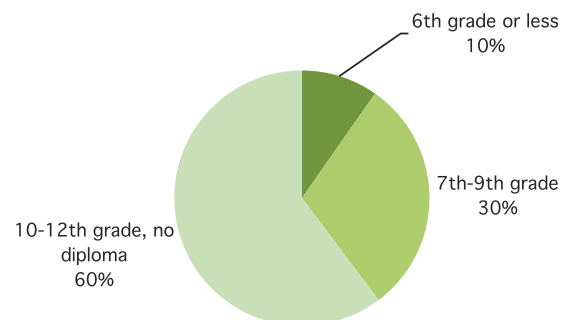
The second fact has to do with the labor market in the United States and in Illinois. Among the jobs being created in the U.S., a large portion only require low levels of preparation, with some 40 percent of new jobs each year requiring only short- or moderate-term on-the-job training.⁵ Thus, for many immigrants low levels of education is not an impediment to employment per se, because so many jobs seek low-skilled labor.

ELLs and immigrant adult learners thus include many persons with less than grade-school education. Among ELLs, about a third has completed six or less grades, and among the immigrant adult learners, almost half are at that level. Among native-born adult learners, 60 percent have completed at least 10th grade.

Educational Attainment of Immigrant Adult Learners



Educational Attainment of Native-Born Adult Learners

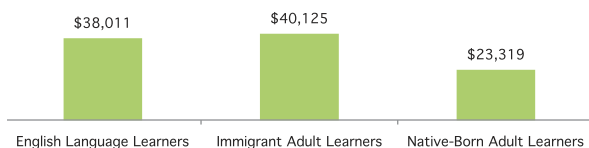


⁵ Norkewicz and Paral 2009 Mexican Immigration in the Midwest: Meaning and Implications Chicago: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

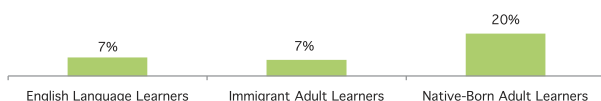
ELLs and immigrant adult learners are more likely employed, above poverty and with higher incomes than comparable natives

The presence of ELLs and immigrants in Illinois is closely connected to the state's labor force needs. ELLs and immigrant adult learners are dramatically less likely to be unemployed than natives who have not completed high school. The former had average unemployment levels of 7 percent during the 2005-2008 period, compared to 20 percent for the latter. Related to this, poverty rates among ELLs and immigrant adult learners are much lower than among native-born adult learners, and average household incomes are 60 percent higher among ELLs and 72 percent higher among immigrant adult learners than among natives who have not completed high school.

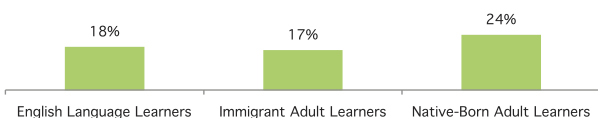
Household Income



Percent Unemployed



Percent in Poverty

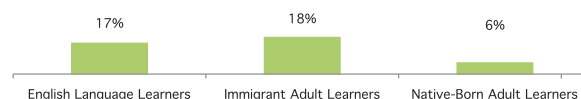


Households of the ELLs and immigrant adult learners include small children

A key difference between immigrants needing English and adult education and native-born adult learners is the kind of households they live in. There is a much greater incidence of living in family units among ELLs (89.7 percent) and immigrant adult learners (90.7 percent) than among native-born adult learners (76.7 percent).

ELLs and immigrant adult learners are also more likely to have young children. More than 17 percent of both groups have children who are less than six years old, compared to 6 percent of native-born adult learners.

Percentage Who Have Young Children



Discussion

This section of the report demonstrates that not only are ELLs and immigrant adult learners a large portion of the need for adult education services but also a population with a particular set of needs. Bringing services to these persons requires intentionality and thoughtfulness about how best to reach and serve this unique population.

ELLs and immigrant adult learners are not uniformly spread across the state. Their impact falls more heavily on certain community college districts, particularly in suburban Chicago. The size and concentration of these populations call for strategically targeting substantial resources to specific areas and districts.

It matters, too, that so much of the need consists of Latinos and immigrants from Latin America. Public institutions of many kinds are increasingly aware of the need for "cultural competency" in interacting appropriately and effectively with the different communities that constitute the American mosaic.

For Latinos, this means, among other things, that educational services should be bilingual and personnel should be bicultural as much as possible. The household structures of immigrant and Latino families also imply child care demands that may need to be met in part by educational institutions trying to serve parents.

The relatively low levels of formal education found among many immigrant adult learners affects the curricular needs of those students. Community colleges and other adult education institutions may need to broaden the levels at which ABE and ESL classes are offered.

But while ELLs and immigrant adult learners may have characteristics that make them perhaps more difficult to reach and serve, they have extraordinary assets

in terms of their household incomes and economic profile. The population works and has income to an extent not seen among native-born adult learners. This suggests an ability to contribute to funding for educational services. The attachment to the labor force also means that these learners may need to fit school around their work schedules, and may need coursework that is relevant to job demands, such as workplace English.

5 FOCUS ON ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS

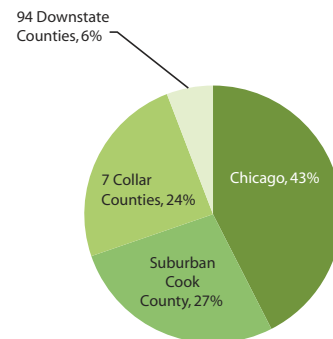


ELLs with relatively low levels of English are more likely to live in Chicago, are more likely to be Latino, and have substantially lower levels of formal education

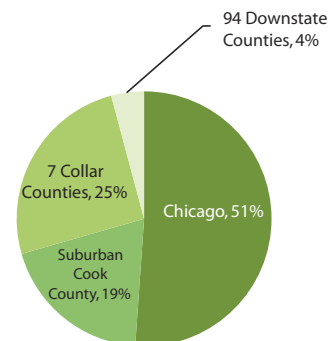
There are notable differences between ELLs who do not speak English well and ELLs who do not speak English at all. ELLs with the lowest levels of English are more likely to live in the city of Chicago than those who speak English “not well,” who are more likely to be in the Cook suburbs. At the same time, both types of English speakers are present in equal proportions in the collar counties.

In terms of race and ethnicity, the major difference between ELLs with no English and those who do not speak English well is the proportion of Whites and Latinos. Whites are 21 percent of ELLs speaking English “not well,” but only 12 percent of those who do not speak English at all. The reverse is true of Latinos, who are more prominent among those who do not speak English at all. Asians are present among both levels of English speakers in approximately the same proportion.

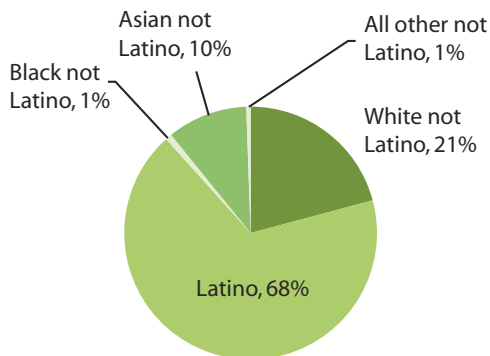
Place of Residence of Adults Who Do Not Speak English Well



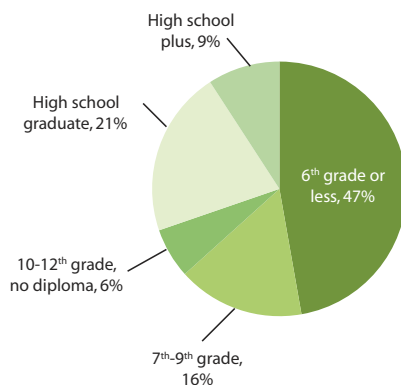
Place of Residence of Adults Who Do Not Speak English At All



**Race/Ethnicity of Adults
Who Do Not Speak English Well**



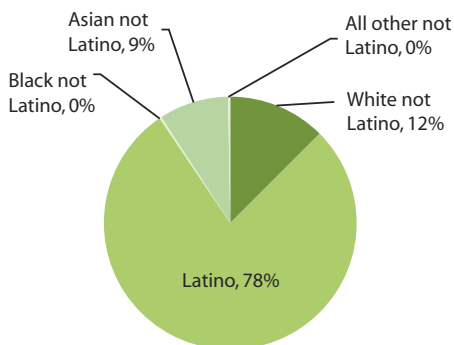
**Educational Attainment of Adults
Who Do Not Speak English Well**



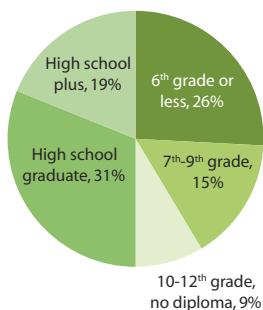
Moving up even one level of English produces substantial economic payoff

English ability is connected to improved economic situation, but as the charts on these pages show, even incremental improvements to English ability are associated with higher incomes, lower poverty and lower unemployment rates. Persons who speak English “not well” are measurably better off than those with no English ability. Their household incomes are 28 percent higher; their poverty rate is 8 points lower; and their unemployment rate is 6 percent, compared to 8 percent among those who do not speak English at all.

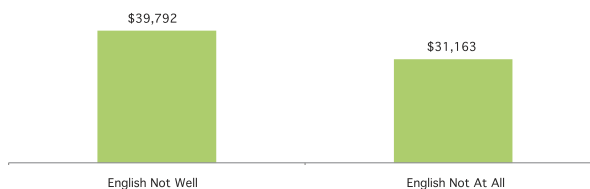
**Race/Ethnicity of Adults
Who Do Not Speak English At All**



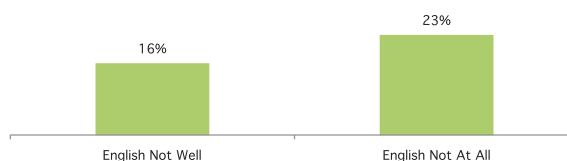
**Race/Ethnicity of Adults
Who Do Not Speak English At All**



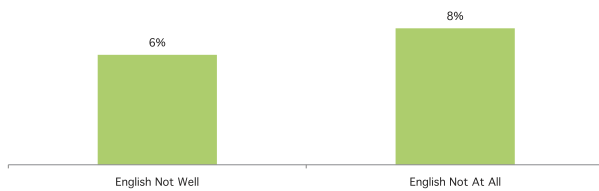
**Household Income of English
Language Learners**



**Percent of English Language
Learners in Poverty**



Percent of English Language Learners Who Are Unemployed



Discussion

Persons with the lowest levels of English ability are somewhat more likely to live in Chicago and to be Latino. But strikingly, a large portion of these ELLs live outside Chicago, with 44 percent residing in the suburbs. All community college districts are likely to encounter ELLs with many different levels of ability, most of whom are Latino.

The substantial portion of persons with no English who have six or less grades of education (almost half the population, compared to only a quarter of those who speak English “not well”) clearly presents a special challenge to the adult education system. Such low levels of formal education imply needs in basic skills that require instructors to use different teaching methods than they would employ with ELLs of higher education.

This, of course, calls for as much differentiation as possible of the curriculum. For community colleges and other institutions facing budget cutbacks and reduced resources, the special needs within the ELL community require exactly the kind of additional resources that may be harder to come by.

Despite the needs for substantial basic education among many ELLs, the return on investment for local communities is significant. Higher proficiency in English – even when higher means that a person still does not speak the language well – means more employment, income, tax payments, and spending in the community.

6 FOCUS ON IMMIGRANT ADULT LEARNERS

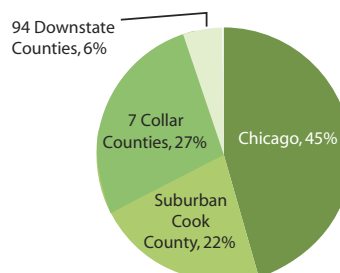


Among immigrant adult learners, those with higher levels of education are likelier to live in the Chicago suburbs; Latinos predominate among all educational levels

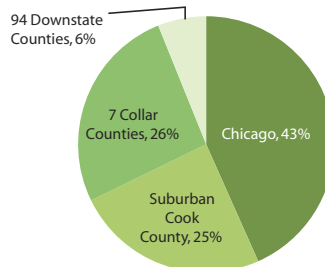
As seen with ELLs of differing English ability, immigrant adult learners have clear differences tied to the grade level that they completed. Those immigrant adult learners who have completed at least 10th grade are more likely to live in the Cook County suburbs and less likely to be in Chicago. The percentage that lives in the collar counties remains approximately the same regardless of grade level completed.

Among immigrant adult learners, Latinos predominate regardless of the grade level completed, but a substantial difference nevertheless may be seen. Latinos are 84 percent of those who finished six or less grades, but only 60 percent of those who completed at least ten grades.

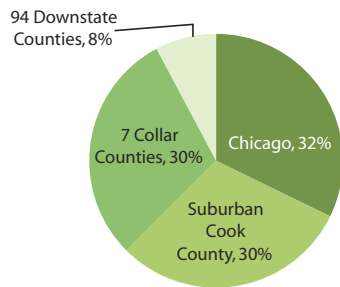
Immigrant Adult Learners with Educational Attainment of 6th Grade or Less



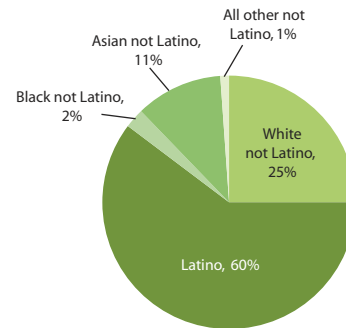
Immigrant Adult Learners with Educational Attainment of 7th to 9th Grade



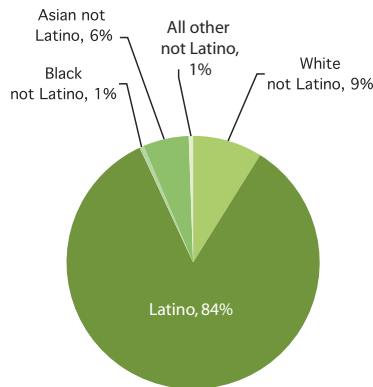
Immigrant Adult Learners with Educational Attainment of 10th to 12th Grade but No Diploma



Race/Ethnicity of Immigrant Adult Learners with Educational Attainment of 10th to 12th Grade but No Diploma



Race/Ethnicity of Immigrant Adult Learners with Educational Attainment of 6th Grade or Less



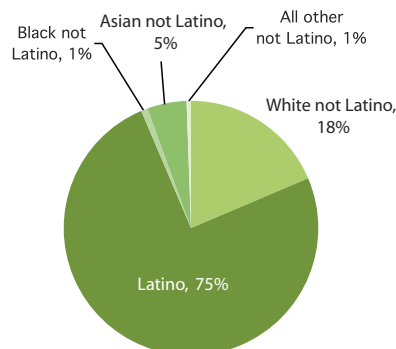
Incremental educational gains lead to clear economic gain

There is a clear relationship between education levels and earned income in the United States. In fact, incrementally higher levels of schooling – even among those persons with no high school – can be connected to substantially better measures of economic well-being.

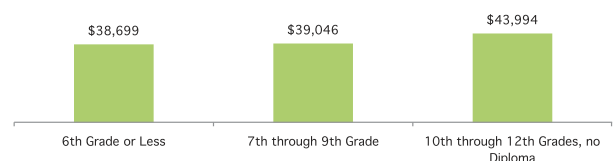
Among immigrant adult learners, for example, those who have completed at least ten grades of education have household incomes that are 13 percent higher than persons with seven to nine grades of education. The former average almost \$5,000 more income per year in their households. A similarly better outcome is also apparent in the measure of poverty.

Although the gains are clear between those who have completed at least ten grades and those who have not, they are not so obvious among those who have completed seven to nine grades compared to those with six or less grades of education. These two cohorts have much more comparable incomes and poverty levels. This suggests a type of “floor” below which individuals are less likely to distinguish themselves economically via the addition of only one or two years of education.

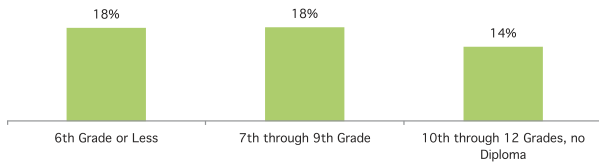
Race/Ethnicity of Immigrant Adult Learners with Educational Attainment of 7th to 9th Grade



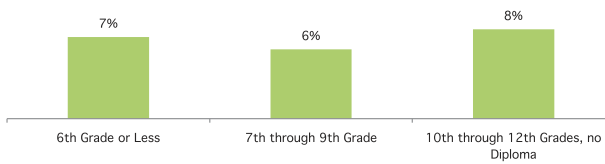
Household Income of Immigrant Adult Learners



Percent of Immigrant Adult Learners Below Poverty



Percent of Immigrant Adult Learners Who Are Unemployed



Discussion

As with English ability – where, as discussed in the previous section, incremental gains can lead to economic payoffs – grade-level improvements in educational attainment have benefits for immigrants in terms of income and economic security, and for communities in terms of tax base and spending.

Unfortunately, while community colleges and other adult educational institutions raise the educational ability of their service population, they do not necessarily reap greater state or local support commensurate with those gains. Nevertheless, the data in this report linking improvements in status to broader social outcomes highlight the critical role that these institutions play in the stabilization and growth of their regions.

7 NEED AND SERVICE AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS



Illinois has 39 community college districts whose discrete service areas combine to cover the entire state. Information at the level of individual districts is important because the boundaries and geographic coverage of these districts capture regional differences of Illinois that reflect immigration settlement patterns, i.e., central city, suburbs, sections of northern Illinois and downstate. Information on individual districts is also important because presumably colleges and institutions in each district have a certain degree of autonomy to allocate resources across different areas of need.

We examined data on how many persons potentially need English and ABE classes, and compared it to numbers of persons actually served. To gauge the extent of need for ELL and ABE services we first developed estimates of ELLs and immigrant adult learners using American Community Survey data; this involved an allocation procedure described in the Methodology section of this report. We compared these estimates of need against numbers of persons served as reported in publications of the Illinois Community College Board (described further in the Methodology section).

Measures of ELL need and service

Statewide, only 15.7 percent of potential ELL need is being met. The community college districts with the highest level of need for ELL instruction are Chicago (258,578 persons), DuPage (39,840), Lake County (36,808), Harper (32,726) and Elgin (27,905). A slightly different ranking of these districts emerges when looking at numbers served: Chicago (39,192 served), Harper (8,467), DuPage (6,443), Lake County (5,164) and Triton (4,611).

We developed a percentage calculation involving persons served as a percent of need, and found that the highest percentages were in Heartland (62.5 percent), Shawnee (58.3) Richland (45.6), Parkland (34.1) and Black Hawk (30.6). The numbers of ELLs potentially needing instruction in each of these areas ranged from 206 (Richland) to 3,129 (Parkland)—relatively small populations compared to Chicago and the districts in the collar counties.

Total ESL Instruction

District	Name	Need in Community College District ¹	Served by Community College District ²	Disparity of need vs. served	Percent Served
503	Black Hawk	2,930	898	2,032	30.6%
508	Chicago	258,578	39,192	219,386	15.2%
507	Danville	351	29	322	8.3%
502	DuPage	39,840	6,443	33,397	16.2%
509	Elgin	27,905	3,662	24,243	13.1%
512	Harper	32,726	8,467	24,259	25.9%
540	Heartland	1,261	788	473	62.5%
519	Highland	601	100	501	16.6%
514	Illinois Central	1,606	154	1,452	9.6%
529	Illinois Eastern	311	75	236	24.1%
513	Illinois Valley	1,291	289	1,002	22.4%
525	Joliet	16,962	1,330	15,632	7.8%
520	Kankakee	2,232	92	2,140	4.1%
501	Kaskaskia	416	63	353	15.1%
523	Kishwaukee	2,134	617	1,517	28.9%
532	Lake County	36,808	5,164	31,644	14.0%
517	Lake Land	482	63	419	13.1%
536	Lewis & Clark	796	52	744	6.5%
526	Lincoln Land	1,164	337	827	29.0%
530	Logan	636	34	602	5.3%
528	McHenry County	9,227	1,688	7,539	18.3%
524	Moraine Valley	16,405	1,898	14,507	11.6%
527	Morton	25,770	2,306	23,464	8.9%
535	Oakton	24,302	2,635	21,667	10.8%
505	Parkland	3,129	1,068	2,061	34.1%
515	Prairie State	3,690	828	2,862	22.4%
521	Rend Lake	259	11	248	4.2%
537	Richland	206	94	112	45.6%
511	Rock Valley	8,407	1,519	6,888	18.1%
518	Sandburg	452	86	366	19.0%
506	Sauk Valley	954	67	887	7.0%
531	Shawnee	216	126	90	58.3%
510	South Suburban	5,718	715	5,003	12.5%
533	Southeastern	104	0	104	0.0%
522	Southwestern	1,779	425	1,554	21.5%
534	Spoon River	261	44	217	16.9%
504	Triton	23,145	4,611	18,534	19.9%
516	Waubonsee	21,914	4,312	17,602	19.7%
539	Wood	178	14	164	7.9%
	Illinois total	575,346	90,296	485,050	15.7%

¹ Source: Authors' estimates based on American Community Survey and 2000 Census; see Methodology for details

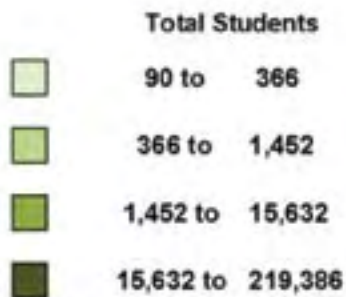
² Source: 2008 Data and Characteristics of the Community College System

Finally, we looked at community college districts with the highest numbers of ELLs potentially needing services. We defined these as districts with at least 10,000 ELLs. As seen in the table below, these districts had clearly different rates of meeting need. The number served in Harper represented approximately 26 percent of need—the highest rate among the districts with large ELL populations; Triton and Waubensee met close to 20 percent of need. The districts serving the relatively smallest percentages of persons in need were Joliet (7.8 percent) and Morton (8.9 percent).

These percentages are meant to illustrate the scope of need and service. The difference between the percent served in Joliet (7.8) and Harper (25.9) are substantial in arithmetic terms, yet the great majority of ELLs in both districts are not currently enrolled in classes.

District	Name	Need in Community College District ¹	Served by Community College District ²	Disparity of need vs. served	Percent Served
508	Chicago	258,578	39,192	219,386	15.2%
502	DuPage	39,840	6,443	33,397	16.2%
532	Lake County	36,808	5,164	31,644	14.0%
512	Harper	32,726	8,467	24,259	25.9%
509	Elgin	27,905	3,662	24,243	13.1%
527	Morton	25,770	2,306	23,464	8.9%
535	Oakton	24,302	2,635	21,667	10.8%
504	Triton	23,145	4,611	18,534	19.9%
516	Waubensee	21,914	4,312	17,602	19.7%
525	Joliet	16,962	1,330	15,632	7.8%
524	Moraine Valley	16,405	1,898	14,507	11.6%

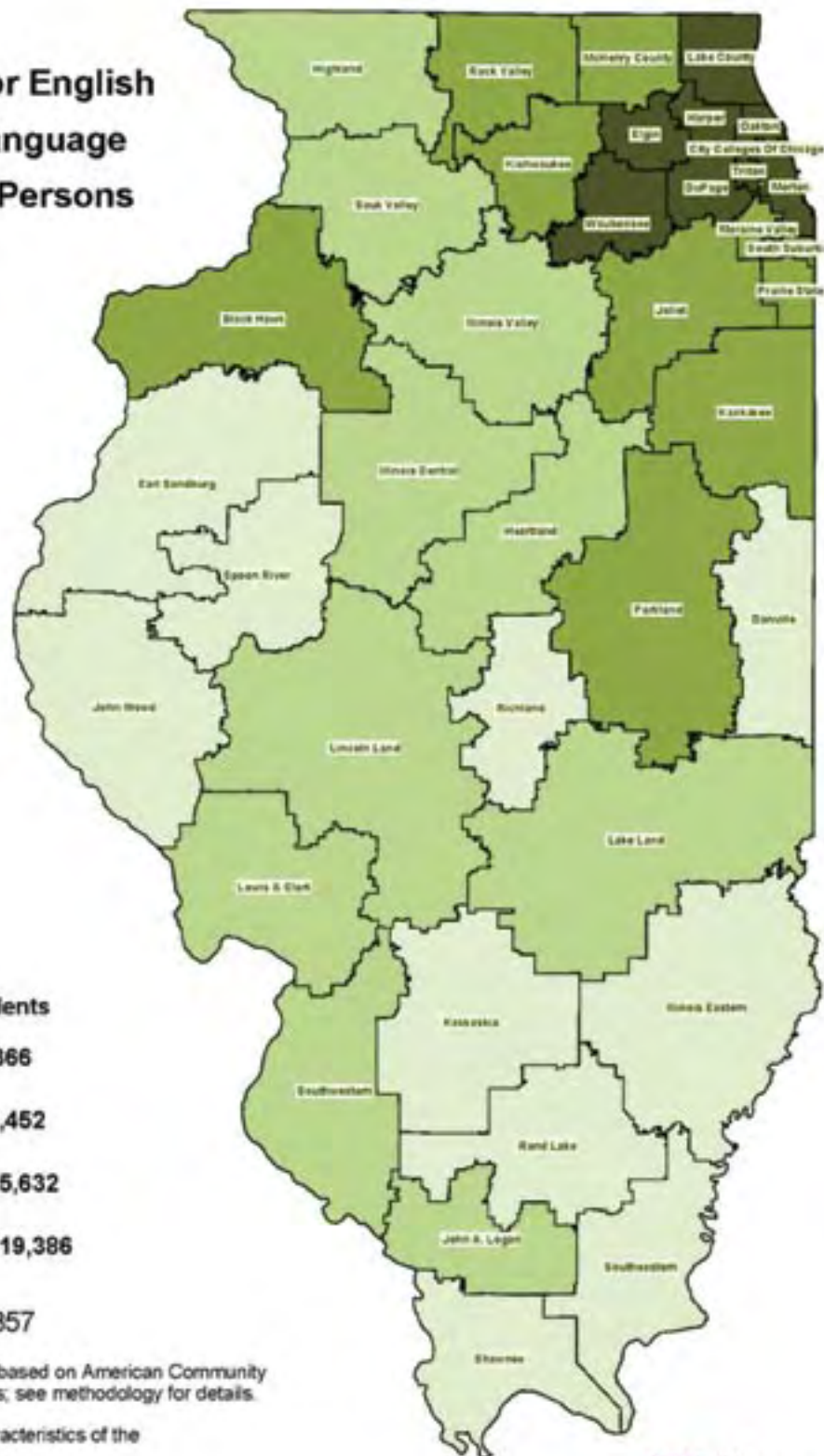
Potential Need for English as a Second Language Classes: Total Persons



Illinois Total: 484,857

Source: Authors' estimates based on American Community Survey and the 2000 Census; see methodology for details.

Source: 2008 data and characteristics of the Community College System.



Measures of ABE need and service

Similar to the examination of ELL need and service above, we developed estimates of need for ABE compared to persons served. Unfortunately, data on foreign-born persons served in ABE classes are not available. Data on students in ABE, however, are available by race, and race serves as a useful proxy for nativity in the case of Latinos and Asians. Among Latino adults without a high school education in Illinois, 79.2 percent are immigrants, according to the American Community Survey for the 2005-2008 period. For Asians, immigrants are 94.8 percent of adults with no high school. Thus information on Latinos and Asians in ABE may be usefully employed to understand the extent to which Latino and Asian immigrants are served.

Latinos

Statewide, only 1.4 percent of potential ABE need among Latinos is being met. The districts with the greatest need, i.e., the greatest numbers of Latino adults who have not completed high school, are Chicago (206,294 persons), Lake County (34,318), Elgin (27,315), Morton (25,588) and DuPage (23,924). The percentage of need met by service was highest in Southeastern (11.1 percent), Kankakee (9.3), Richland (7.1), Kishwaukee (4.9) and Highland (4.2).

ABE Disparities of Latinos

District	Name	Need in Community College District ¹	Served by Community College District ²	Disparity of need vs. served	Percent Served
503	Black Hawk	3,332	132	3,200	4.0%
508	Chicago	206,294	2,612	203,682	1.3%
507	Danville	829	12	817	1.4%
502	DuPage	23,924	118	23,806	0.5%
509	Elgin	27,315	309	27,006	1.1%
512	Harper	18,853	295	18,558	1.6%
540	Heartland	1,183	12	1,171	1.0%
519	Highland	403	17	386	4.2%
514	Illinois Central	819	31	788	3.8%
529	Illinois Eastern	456	4	452	0.9%
513	Illinois Valley	1,718	30	1,688	1.7%
525	Joliet	18,199	147	18,052	0.8%
520	Kankakee	2,735	255	2,480	9.3%
501	Kaskaskia	384	8	376	2.1%
523	Kishwaukee	2,057	100	1,957	4.9%
532	Lake County	34,318	247	34,071	0.7%
517	Lake Land	312	12	300	3.8%
536	Lewis & Clark	335	6	329	1.8%
526	Lincoln Land	705	20	685	2.8%
530	Logan	490	6	484	1.2%
528	McHenry County	7,179	135	7,044	1.9%
524	Moraine Valley	9,526	62	9,464	0.7%
527	Morton	25,588	296	25,292	1.2%
535	Oakton	6,531	218	6,313	3.3%
505	Parkland	1,161	22	1,139	1.9%
515	Prairie State	4,275	95	4,180	2.2%
521	Rend Lake	361	5	356	1.4%
537	Richland	127	9	118	7.1%
511	Rock Valley	9,838	255	9,583	2.6%
518	Sandburg	689	9	680	1.3%
506	Sauk Valley	1,227	26	1,201	2.1%
531	Shawnee	483	8	475	1.7%
510	South Suburban	6,672	66	6,606	1.0%
533	Southeastern	180	20	160	11.1%
522	Southwestern	2,181	60	2,121	2.8%
534	Spoon River	308	5	303	1.6%
504	Triton	16,000	264	15,736	1.7%
516	Waubonsee	22,614	351	22,263	1.6%
539	Wood	317	2	315	0.6%
	Illinois total	459,918	6,281	453,637	1.4%

¹ Source: Authors' estimates based on American Community Survey and 2000 Census; see Methodology for details

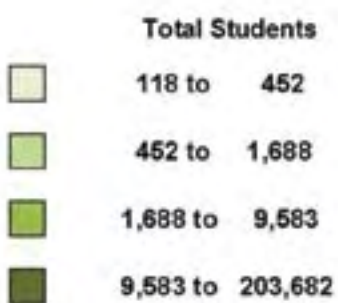
² Source: 2008 Data and Characteristics of the Community College System

We looked at the extent to which districts with the highest numbers of Latino adult learners were meeting need. We chose those districts with at least 15,000

Latino adults who had not completed high school, as seen below. The percentage served in ABE was less than 2 percent in each district.

District	Name	Need in Community College District ¹	Served by Community College District ²	Disparity of need vs. served	Percent Served
508	Chicago	206,294	2,612	203,682	1.3%
532	Lake County	34,318	247	34,071	0.7%
509	Elgin	27,315	309	27,006	1.1%
527	Morton	25,588	296	25,292	1.2%
502	DuPage	23,924	118	23,806	0.5%
516	Waubonsee	22,614	351	22,263	1.6%
512	Harper	18,853	295	18,558	1.6%
525	Joliet	18,199	147	18,052	0.8%
504	Triton	16,000	264	15,736	1.7%

**Potential Need for
Adult Education:
Latinos**



Illinois Total: 453,637

Asians

Statewide, only 1.9 percent of potential ABE need among Asians is being met. The community college districts with the greatest potential need for ABE services among Asians (i.e., the districts with the largest numbers of Asian adults who have not completed high school) are Chicago (15,157 persons), DuPage (4,244), Oakton (3,653), Harper (2,343) and Lake County (1,755).

Of these top five districts, Chicago, DuPage, and Lake are also among the top five areas of need for Latinos. This highlights the different races and ethnicities that the community colleges and other institutions encounter in their service areas. The percentage of need that was met, in terms of Asians served in ABE classes, was highest in Rock Valley (14.4 percent), Heartland (10.7), Kankakee (7.8), Illinois Valley (7.4) and Lincoln Land (6.8).

ABE Disparities of Asians

District	Name	Need in Community College District ¹	Served by Community College District ²	Disparity of need vs. served	Percent Served
503	Black Hawk	253	3	250	1.2%
508	Chicago	15,157	193	14,964	1.3%
507	Danville	0	3	-3	xx
502	DuPage	4,244	38	4,206	0.9%
509	Elgin	1,231	9	1,222	0.7%
512	Harper	2,343	46	2,297	2.0%
540	Heartland	90	10	80	10.7%
519	Highland	97	3	94	3.1%
514	Illinois Central	287	7	280	2.5%
529	Illinois Eastern	141	0	141	0.0%
513	Illinois Valley	54	4	50	7.4%
525	Joliet	738	6	732	0.8%
520	Kankakee	128	10	118	7.8%
501	Kaskaskia	41	2	39	4.9%
523	Kishwaukee	80	4	76	5.0%
532	Lake County	1,755	3	1,752	0.2%
517	Lake Land	95	0	95	0.0%
536	Lewis & Clark	52	0	52	0.0%
526	Lincoln Land	116	8	108	6.8%
530	Logan	138	5	133	3.4%
528	McHenry County	234	4	230	1.7%
524	Moraine Valley	450	9	441	2.0%
527	Morton	111	3	108	2.7%
535	Oakton	3,653	154	3,499	4.2%
505	Parkland	432	4	428	0.8%
515	Prairie State	224	4	220	1.8%
521	Rend Lake	25	0	25	0.0%
537	Richland	61	0	61	0.0%
511	Rock Valley	242	35	207	14.4%
518	Sandburg	33	0	33	0.0%
506	Sauk Valley	32	2	30	6.3%
531	Shawnee	107	7	100	6.5%
510	South Suburban	206	3	203	1.5%
533	Southeastern	45	2	43	4.4%
522	Southwestern	227	29	198	12.7%
534	Spoon River	4	6	-2	xx
504	Triton	565	12	553	2.1%
516	Waubensee	253	15	238	5.9%
539	Wood	47	0	47	0.0%
	Illinois total	33,991	643	33,348	1.9%

¹ Source: Authors' estimates based on American Community Survey and 2000 Census; see Methodology for details

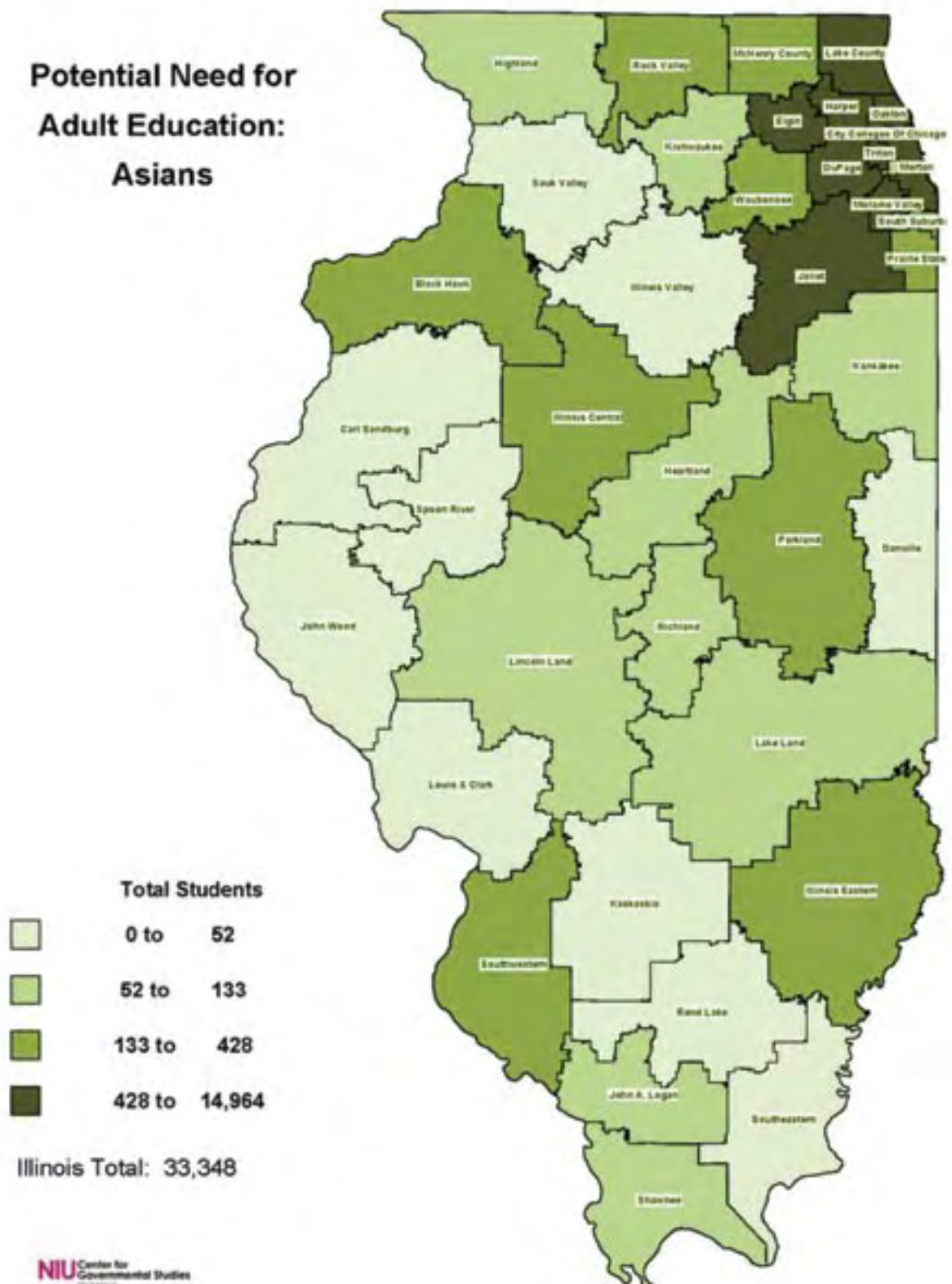
² Source: 2008 Data and Characteristics of the Community College System

We examined the percent of persons using ABE classes in those districts with the largest numbers of Asians lacking high school, and included districts with at least 1,000 such persons. Oakton had the highest percentage served – 4.2 percent – a rate that was

double that of other schools with large populations. The other schools served a percentage that ranged from 0.2 in Lake County to 2.0 in Harper.

District	Name	Need in Community college District ¹	Served by Community college District ²	Disparity of need vs. served	Percent Served
508	Chicago	15,157	193	14,964	1.3%
502	DuPage	4,244	38	4,206	0.9%
535	Oakton	3,653	154	3,499	4.2%
512	Harper	2,343	46	2,297	2.0%
532	Lake County	1,755	3	1,752	0.2%
509	Elgin	1,231	9	1,222	0.7%

Potential Need for Adult Education: Asians



Discussion

The extent to which ELLs are receiving instruction in the adult education system is at best a mixed bag. More than 10 percent of the need may be met in many of the larger districts, at least in terms of students being in class. (The numbers do not speak to how many classes or how many hours of instruction are needed to make a difference.) Some 90,000 persons being served in English classes may be more than many observers would expect. Still, Illinois' total ELL population exceeds half a million, so the vast majority of need is clearly not being addressed in the classroom.

The story with ABE instruction is more serious. The estimation method used in this section suggests that the percent of persons getting a class (again, ignoring whether they need many classes over a long period of time) is tiny, in the low single digits for Latinos in virtually all districts. Increasing numbers of reports are highlighting the value of adult education in refashioning our labor force. The data on services to persons needing basic education suggests that the scope of the challenge is huge for the hundreds of thousands of Illinois residents who have not completed high school education.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS



Government, the private sector, and the community at large all have a stake in seeing our state's adult education system meet the demand for English and ABE instruction. Our state government and adult education programs need to take several major steps to ensure that immigrants fulfill their potential.

State of Illinois

State lawmakers need to continue and indeed **increase their support for English and ABE instruction**, viewing such support as **investment in our state's workforce** that will provide rich dividends for our state's economy. Policymakers should see adult education instruction as increasingly meeting two major interests of our state: increased workforce productivity and competitiveness and integration of immigrants into the social and economic fabric of the state.

In addition, state funding streams for English and ABE instruction should be adjusted to better reflect the geographic and demographic shifts in where immigrant learners are residing, and where the need for instruction lies. The growth and concentration of immigrant adult learners and ELLs in the Chicago suburbs, which until recently had not received significant numbers of immigrants, calls for appropriate funding levels that would enable programs in those areas to meet their growing potential needs for English and ABE programming. Illinois has already authorized a **We Want to Learn English Initiative** that would devote

\$15 million, through the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), to reaching immigrant learners in their communities; the state should fully fund and implement this initiative.

Finally, given the importance of immigrants to our state's economy and workforce, the state should **better integrate its English and adult education systems with workforce training and other state initiatives**. ICCB should be working collaboratively with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and other agencies to move learners seamlessly toward better jobs and better opportunities.

Adult education programs

Adult education programs themselves also need to adjust to the demographic changes in their districts. **More classes for English language learners** are a given, due to the continuing arrival of newcomers in areas that had not previously been home to significant numbers of foreign-born persons.

Immigrants are a growing portion of adult learners, and their levels of formal education are lower, on average, than those of native-born adult learners. The wide diversity of educational level among English language learners makes it critical that instruction **address each level of learner with appropriate curricula and teaching techniques**. In particular, programs should focus on lower-level immigrant

learners, who would gain substantially and contribute even more to our economy when they improve their English skills and educational attainment.

Immigrant learners are also more likely to work and to have small children in their households, making scheduling difficult. These trends call for **flexible class times, supportive services such as child care, and cultural competency**, particularly for Latino learners, among adult education programs.

Finally, while community colleges tend to be the largest institutions serving each college district, the large size of the immigrant population needing ELL and ABE programs means that the burden of satisfying demand should not lie solely with those colleges. Community-based organizations play an important role in providing ELL and ABE classes, and are often able to reach immigrants in the community and provide supportive services. **Increasing the amount of services offered through community organizations and building partnerships among these programs and community colleges** is crucial to meeting the need.

9 CONCLUSION



This report attempts to describe the major characteristics of immigrants who need English and adult education instruction in Illinois, discuss some of the links between getting these kinds of education and improving one's economic status, and explore the extent to which community colleges and other adult education institutions currently meet the need. The findings describe an extremely large population that would benefit from services and that do indeed benefit in concrete, economic terms even when improvement in English ability or grade attainment is incremental. Meanwhile, the system – regardless of the reason, be it resources or attempted enrollment – serves a small portion of the need.

All of this must be understood in the context of the Illinois fiscal situation, given that tax collections for educational systems are down and local and state governments

face yawning deficits. As policymakers struggle with choosing winners and losers among programs to be saved or even to receive increased funding, the adult education system's services to immigrant adult basic education students and English language learners should be looked at as investment. Increased education and English ability redounds to the benefit not just of the immigrant community but to the state, which seeks to regain competitiveness and improve its workforce. As an immigrant state and a state with an adult education system capable of helping those immigrants to leverage their aspirations and skills, Illinois must look at adult education services to the foreign-born and to limited English speakers as a necessity.

10 METHODOLOGY



Survey Data on Need

Most socioeconomic and demographic numbers in this report are derived from the American Community Survey (ACS) for years 2005-2008. The ACS is an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and its coverage includes approximately one percent of all households in Illinois. We aggregate ACS samples from the 2005-2008 period to decrease sampling variability and improve the reliability of the final tabulations. We define English-language learners (ELLs) in this report as persons who do not speak English well or who do not speak English at all. This definition is without regard to nativity, and a small number of ELLs are born in the U.S. or its territories and possessions, notably Puerto Rico. We define foreign-born persons who lack high school to include noncitizens and naturalized citizens who have completed up to 12 grades of education yet who have not received a high school diploma.

Data cited as pertaining to year 2000 are derived from the census of that year.

Estimating need in community college districts:

American Community Survey (ACS) data are not provided by the Census Bureau for Illinois community college districts. To estimate need for these districts, we apportion 2005-2008 ACS data at the level of public use microdata areas into ACS districts using block-level race/ethnicity characteristics from the 2000 census. Our block-level definitions of community college district boundaries were made available by the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois university.

Administrative Data on Persons Served

Data on persons served in adult education programs come from reports of the Illinois Community College Board, specifically, *FY 2008 Illinois Adult Education and Family: Literacy Data and Characteristics*, found at http://www.iccb.org/pdf/adulted/publications_reports/aefldatabook08.pdf and *Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System*, at <http://www.iccb.org/pdf/reports/databook2008.pdf>.

The *Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System* report provides numbers of persons receiving ABE and ESL at, respectively, tables III-17 and III-19. The *FY 2008 Illinois Adult Education and Family...* report provides numbers of persons receiving ABE and ESL at both community colleges and local nonprofit agencies. Although the reports cover different fiscal years, we were concerned that the *Data and Characteristics...* report may not include ABE and ESL services delivered via nonprofit agencies. To account for this possibility, and to develop estimates of ABE and ESL services that are as extensive as possible, we assumed that *Data and Characteristics* did not include nonprofit providers, and we increased the ABE and ESL estimates of *Data and Characteristics* using the proportions of adult education providers and nonprofit providers published in *FY2008 Illinois Adult Education and Family...* Again, this correction was done to develop estimates of service provision that are as comprehensive as possible, and which avoid undercounting the services provided through the Illinois Community College Board.



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