# Five Year Trends in Adult Education in Virginia

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Hello, my name is Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, I am the Adult Education Coordinator in the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. This tutorial is a lookback at five years of Virginia Adult Education trend data, program years 2017-2018 through 2021-2022.

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As you know, Virginia is divided in to 22 regions for adult education. This ensures that we have full coverage for the Commonwealth. Our fiscal agents are local educational agencies (school divisions), community colleges and community-based organizations. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) grants are awarded based on population need, not by region [affilitation].

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This slide shows where adult education is placed in the workforce development system in Virginia. As you can see, we are nested within several secretariats who have responsibilities for workforce. We are over on the right; title II is adult education; we are in the Department of Education and our partners are in other areas but we work closely with our WIOA title partners and our stakeholders in serving adults. We have some cross-training and professional development events that we have participated in with those partners including *Serving Individuals with Disabilities, the Sector Strategies and Career Pathways Academy* has been cross agency*.* We have done *Trauma Informed Care* and we share a curriculum for *Adult Career Coaches* so that students may be served by a single set of efforts.

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This slide shows our funding and includes the 2022-2023 award. Our federal awards have increased over the years, as you can see in the blue. Our state awards have remained stable; they are labeled only in the final bar to the right. Of note, our localities are required to provide a 15% match to the federal awards, so adult education in Virginia is truly a federal-state-local partnership.

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Whom do we serve? We have some slides that cover all of these data points

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Our enrollment trends are presented here. Of course, our enrollment decreased during the pandemic, but as you can see, we are rebounding. We reported 14,152 students in program year 2021-2022. This is similar to the national trends. One thing to celebrate is our retention rates remained high during the pandemic and I want to celebrate what that means: from the programs that’s a lot of tutoring, personal outreach, flexibility extended to students to help them stay in and attain their goals through a lot of disrupted schedules. So kudos to our programs and teachers for that extra effort. The graph on the bottom right is correctional education and as you may know, many facilities were completely closed to outside services during the pandemic and even in 2021-2022 many facilities were short staffed and so they could not accommodate services coming into the facilities. This set of our population is rebuilding more slowly as those facilities get back to normal.

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We can look at enrollment trends by program type. Over half of our learners are served in English language programs. Usually that is up near the 60% mark. We were off trend in 2020-2021, we saw the biggest drop in our enrollment among our English language learners, but we are coming back and in 2021-2022 we are happy to see lots of those learners came back to us and that year was almost back on trend. We are a majority-minority program and serve most of our learners in English language programs.

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We serve working age adults, here is our age ranges and mostly women. Our largest age group is 25-44 years old. These are very busy years in a family for adults and we applaud our students for adding education onto their already busy schedule. It’s worth noting that over 65% of our students are women and this is something we are looking at for programming implications. The last couple of years, probably related to correctional education enrollment being so low, our population was even more heavily skewed toward women, but we are getting back toward trend on that. Even so, every year, we have seen many more women than men.

I would like to pause for a moment on the dark blue part of the bars, which is the youth. We can serve young students, 16-18, if they have been excused from compulsory attendance. As our graduation rates in Virginia continue to rise, which we applaud, we see fewer young people under the age of 18 enrolled in adult education. Also, 60+ can be quite the range, we have served individuals with many more years than 60 and we are happy to do it. All of those folks are eligible, and we are happy to be serving seniors.

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Here is another way to look at enrollment. We serve minorities, mostly Hispanic. You can see the trends here with the sharp uptick in 2021-2022, that kick – we are coming back. You can see that Hispanic students are our largest minority group. It was the most impacted in our enrollment in 2020-2021, but we are coming back to trend. It is worth saying that 40% of our total enrollment is Hispanic women in a normal year.

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This is another way to look at our busy learners. Over half of them tell us that they are employed while they are enrolled – almost half, even in 2020-2021 when so many people were out of work. So it is a real honor and privilege to serve learners who are so motivated to continue their education that they are adding it to very busy lives.

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Let’s talk about how we measure success in adult education. I have some slides to talk about all of these points.

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One programming model that we are very proud of is Integrated Education and Training (IET). This was newly allowed in the WIOA legislation and so this is a new and growing model for us. It is an intense combination of academic skills, English language proficiency, workforce preparation and occupational training toward earning an industry recognized credential. These programs are usually short in duration, not longer than a semester and often quite a bit shorter than that. [It is] intense, goal-driven, you sit for your certification exam at the end. It has been an interesting journey to begin to offer this, to reach out to partners and partner to offer this kind of programming and to communicate the opportunity to individuals in our programs and in our communities. As you can see, we have growing enrollment in these programs and growing percent of our total enrollment. Even in 2020-2021 when our enrollment was so low, kudos to our programs for making sure that this opportunity for IET was still available to students. We had 11% of our students that year participate in an IET program; and almost 10% in the most recent year. Just to show you the kinds of trainings that we offer, the top career clusters in 2021-2022 over on the left: manufacturing, healthcare, education, transportation and warehousing were the top but there are many others. You can see a map of planned offerings at the IET Blueprint website.

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Another way to look at this IET success is that we have been communicating that this is a good model for young adults who are disconnected from the workforce. Try to get them in, get them their secondary credential if they don’t have it or refresh and fill in any gaps academically that they may have; get them an occupational training program and help them earn a credential that will get them started in the workforce. We have been communicating that as a good option for young people. It is short, its intense, there are a lot of professionals involved to help them get reconnected and it looks like that is working for us. That is our largest share is the 19–24-year-olds.

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We report to the federal office our Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) performance. You can see that 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were quite disrupted and Virginia had, as the rest of the nation had, allowance to not require assessments which had to be administered in person. We were offering services but not assessing students in the way that we do with pre- and post-testing. 2021-2022 is coming back on trend, our assessments were back in place and many students were assessed online. That has come in from the publishers and has made our remote instruction much more efficient to be able to give the assessments online as well. Something else that came in in 2021-2022 were three new MSG types allowed for students in an IET and workplace literacy programs, so we saw a bump from those MSGs as well.

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Of course, we offer High School Equivalency and help folks get their secondary credential and get back on track. Currently, the GED® is the only approved HSE test in Virginia. This slide shows us Virginia as a whole, not only adult education students but as a whole - what our test-takers, completers and passers have looked like over the past few years. Again, during the pandemic, testing centers had very limited hours or very limited seating. Online proctored testing did get started in 2020, so that is now just part of the normal mix. We are now seeing test-takers, completers, and passers on the way up. As you know, there are four tests in the GED® battery, you must pass all four to earn that credential, so we do see more testers than passers. Our pass rate in Virginia overall is 79%, which is higher than the national average. I am proud of our GED® program.

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The National External Diploma Program is another way that adults can earn their secondary credential. Its an online, self-paced, competency-based option. Graduates earn an Adult High School Diploma issued by a local school division. As you can see there is a small number of students participating in this program, but we are looking to grow it. We know that students are getting more comfortable with online learning, and we think this option can grow for students.

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This slide is not five-year, it is a single year but the trend has remained the same. I want to point out that we are a largely part-time workforce. Almost 95% of our teachers are part-time, our paraprofessionals are largely part-time, our counselors, career-navigators are all part-time and about half-and-half of our administrators are part-time and full-time. This does have implications for how we run our program, how we provide professional development, how we are able to plan. This is a little above the national average for part-time to full-time, so this is a challenge we continue to look at.

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Another way that we ensure quality is to maintain a robust monitoring program. There are many steps to our year-round monitoring cycle. What is represented on the screen is our on-site visits which is the culmination for some folks each year of the monitoring cycle. These are where we have been and when. We did some virtual, hybrid monitoring visits during the pandemic but we are back in-person. We have not been everywhere, but everyone knows that they will have a turn and we will get to get to every program. We love to go out and see programs, teachers, students, partners, and facilities. Monitoring is a real highlight for us and it’s a technical assistance visit for us to the program to really look at the challenges that are unique to an area and think together about strategies to address those challenges. Our monitoring instruments and information about our monitoring program is all publicly available, so everyone knows what it takes to run a compliant program and how to prepare for a monitoring visit when it is their turn.

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We have made some leadership investments that I will talk about in a minute, I just wanted to share some happy photos of students and teachers from the Adult Education and Family Literacy Week of 2022 and just mention that as we leave behind the measures of success such as pre- and post-test gains, one thing that adult education really does do that is not captured on a standardized test is help students build their confidence. These students have wonderful things to say about their teachers and how their teachers really help them unlock their own potential by helping them grow their confidence in themselves as learners. That is always a very rewarding thing about our program is to hear students have grown and how they recognize their own growth.

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Some of our investments are listed here and I will share some slides about these.

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We did offer a leadership training program for our regional program managers and kudos to them for completing this online leadership training at the height of the pandemic. It was offered by the National Association of State Directors of Adult Education. So, nationally recognized leadership training – happy to have our program managers go through it and we can see their growth from having done so. We were also able to offer a Career Coach Certification. As I said, this is a common training offered in Virginia to practitioners who serve adults. We are very happy to be able to bring that to adult educators, and we will continue to support a cohort of career coaches in adult education.

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We invested in online courses that are instructor-led and standards-based. They were built for us by Virtual Virginia, and they are in the content areas of mathematics, English language arts, and English language acquisition. We have nine courses; they are adaptable so instructors can add in and take out as their own students need. They will be available for our programs to host and deliver across the Commonwealth. We are piloting them now, in the fall of 2022, and will be offering facilitation support from Virtual Virginia and the VALRC in 2023. We are really excited to offer this new kind of learning delivery for our students.

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We invested in family literacy for a couple years, really trying to restart this programming model, which is a two-generation approach: teaching adult education to the parents and caregivers of children in school and doing parenting classes and parent and child together programming. We have been working with the National Center for Families Learning which is the national leader in family literacy and offering professional development, technical assistance, and coaching to the programs who are trying to restart family literacy in their communities, and they are represented here on this screen.

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We have offered, for many years, the ability for students in our programs to earn free testing vouchers for the GED®. During the pandemic, we really doubled down on communicating that to adults in Virginia, leaned on our partners to help us communicate that, and we will be continuing these programs in to the coming years – offering students who enroll in adult education and become a participant by attending, either online or in-person, 12 hours of instruction before they test; helping them test for free. The “Just One to Go” campaign looked at the number of individuals in Virginia who had just one test to go. As I said, the GED® is a battery of four tests and there were over 3,000 students who had just one test to go, and for most of them it was math. Our programs have been busy reaching out to students and creating programming designed to just focus on that math component, [they] have offered some bootcamps, special distance education software, etc., to help students refresh, gain their confidence, and then go pass that final test. We have seen that over 10% of that “Just One to Go” list has indeed earned their credential.

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We have also been able to invest some leadership dollars into an Innovation Challenge Award. We offered this grant competition over the summer and were able to make awards in September totaling $810,000 to fund programs where they had expansion opportunities ready at hand. We are very proud of our programs who were able to raise their hand to expand their program. They had opportunities in the re-entry population or with incarcerated individuals. Some programs were able to open up new services to underserved communities, and there were some public libraries listed here. Other programs were able to offer more integrated education and training opportunities: more seats, more cohorts, another occupational focus for these opportunities. Kudos to all of the programs who have received these awards and are able to expand service beyond what they had anticipated for this program year.

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That concludes the trend recording. Reach out to us, we are happy to talk to anyone about adult education. We are proud of our programs, our students, our teachers. We look forward to the rebounding enrollment and growing programming in Virginia. Thank you.