

Employers: Advancing literacy is key to advancing your workforce

Executive Summary

Today's job market is changing rapidly, and the ways in which workers adapted their skills in the past are unlikely to be as effective now due to the quickly evolving nature of work and the increased productivity, technology, and flexibility required in most jobs. According to National Skills Coalition, 54% of in-demand jobs in Ohio require skills training beyond high school, but not a four-year degree.¹ Even with access to training, adults may struggle due to less than proficient literacy and numeracy skills, also known as foundational basic skills. Government, industries, and higher education are planning how to prepare workers for the future, and foundational basic skills must be included in the conversation.

From 2012-2017, U.S. adults ages 16 to 74 participated in The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), a cyclical, large-scale international study. According to the results, the current state of the workforce in the U.S. indicates²:

- 54% of American adults are not at a proficient level of literacy
- 64% are not at a proficient level of numeracy
- 24% are operating at the lowest level of digital skills
- Cuyahoga County is consistent with the national average

The assessment revealed that low literacy permeates a wide range of proxies and demographics throughout the U.S.

- 75% of adults at the lowest level of literacy have earned at least a high school diploma
- 62% of adults at the lowest level of literacy are employed
- 27% of employed adults at the lowest level of literacy are in skilled occupations, 30% are in semi-skilled white-collar occupations, and 20% are in semi-skilled blue-collar occupations³

Therefore, it may be difficult to determine who, in fact, could benefit from literacy and numeracy skill improvement. Even though workers at lower literacy and numeracy levels are able to perform their current tasks, they may find difficulty advancing in their careers when more complex responsibilities and skill building are required.

How do we prepare workers for the current and future global economy? Since many workers in Cuyahoga County could benefit from foundational basic skill improvement, **integrating literacy and**

¹ National Skills Coalition. *The Ohio Skills Mismatch*. 2018. Accessed May, 2021. <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/skills-mismatch/ohio-skills-mismatch>

² U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *Highlights of the 2017 U.S. PIAAC Results Web Report*. 2017. Accessed May 2021. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/current_results.asp.

³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), U.S. PIAAC 2017, U.S. PIAAC 2012/2014

numeracy education into job training is an effective method to guarantee all workers have solid foundational skills.

- [Contextualized curriculum](#) weaves literacy and numeracy instruction into job training and is set within the framework of specific sectors, such as manufacturing, IT, and healthcare, so that workers gain practical job skills while at the same time advance their foundational basic skills.
- When integrating literacy and numeracy lessons into job training, workers obtain higher skills, advance in their careers, and earn higher wages.
- For employers providing workplace training or involved in sector partnerships, this means a more skilled, retainable, and productive workforce – which could result in higher profit margins.

[Click here to download the full report](#)

Contact [The Literacy Cooperative](#) to inquire about workplace programs that can assist employees advance their skills. The success of any business depends upon the skills of its employees. Low literacy can affect safety, productivity, customer service and even employee morale. Employers investing in advancing the skills of their employees can reduce loss and increase profit.

[Click here to learn more about The Literacy Cooperative's contextualized curriculum](#)

[Click here to learn more about sector partnerships in Cuyahoga County](#)

[Click here to learn more about what forward thinking employers can do](#)

For individuals looking to advance their literacy and numeracy skills, call 877-277-4732 to find adult education programs in your community or visit <https://www.ohiohighered.org/aspire/locations>.



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