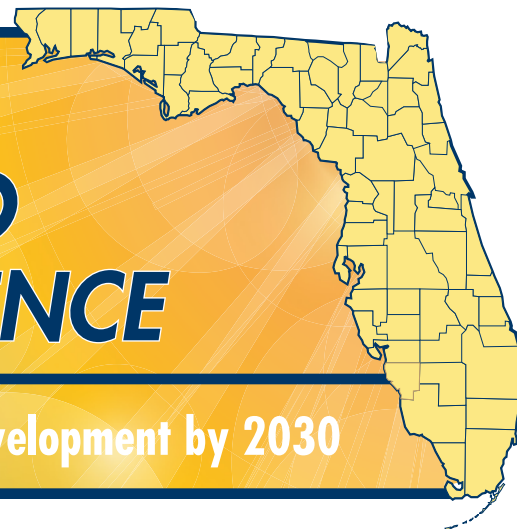


ADULT EDUCATION: FLORIDA'S GATEWAY TO ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Dedicated to Ensuring Florida is #1 in Workforce Development by 2030



The Florida Department of Education's Adult Education programs serve over 187,000 students across the state through adult schools, technical and state colleges, correctional institutions, libraries, and community and faith-based organizations.

Florida's adult education system includes a range of instructional programs that help adults get the basic academic skills they need to enter the workforce, a state college or a technical college, and contribute to Florida's economic development. The major program areas include GED® preparation and testing, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic academic skills instruction in reading, writing, math, and English language competency.

The purpose of the Adult Education Success Stories is to:

- Showcase the triumphs of students who participated in adult education/workforce education programs;
- Demonstrate the results of integrated academics – adult education to career and technical programs to community/state colleges;
- Increase awareness of adult education and career and technical education statewide; and
- Illustrate the impact of these programs on an individual's and state's economic growth.

In this issue, you will read success stories from around the state that illustrate how adult education has impacted the lives of so many. For every one story you read, there are hundreds more that echo the successes of adult education students in Florida.



Adult Education/GED® Program Leads to AA Degree and Employment

Christina DeSensi

Citrus County School District
GED® Preparation Program
Inverness, Florida

Christina DeSensi came to the Withlacoochee Technical College's (WTC) adult education GED® preparation class in April 2014 as a scared, recently divorced thirty-eight-year-old with four children. The home she and the children lived in was in foreclosure. Christina never finished high school and could not find a job that would pay her a living wage without a high school diploma.

With help from the local United Way she was able to provide for her family and attend GED® classes.

Christina earned her GED® credential and was awarded a two-year scholarship to the College of Central Florida.

Christina enrolled in the Paralegal Studies program at the state college where she maintained a 3.5 GPA. She

also landed a part-time job in the College's TRIO program as a tutor and mentor in the WTC GED® preparation program from which she graduated.

Christina graduated with Honors in May 2019 from the College of Central Florida with her AS degree in Paralegal Studies. Realizing her true goal of earning a degree in Forensic Psychology, Christina took the five additional classes needed to complete her AA degree. She graduated with Honors from the College of Central Florida in December 2019 with her AA degree. Christina plans to enroll at USF or UCF to earn her BS in Forensic Psychology.

Christina is a shining example of how adult education programs across Florida serve as a springboard for opportunity, continued education, employment and success.

"If you are willing to work hard, the sky is the limit and anything can be achieved."

CHRISTINA DESENSI



Adult Education/GED® Leads to Bachelor of Nursing and Employment “Sail to 60”

Tabita Lepindea – Lee County Adult and Career Education – Fort Myers, Florida

Tabita Lepindea is a Romanian immigrant who lived a harsh life under Communist rule. She and her family experienced extreme rations on food, water and electricity. At the age of eighteen, her family moved to the United States to escape the Communist tyranny.

She worked as a full-time nanny for several years and despite many personal challenges, finally made the decision to return to school to earn her high school diploma through the Lee County Adult Education GED® Program. **To her, the Lee County Adult Education GED® program was the foundation for her future in the United States.**

Tabita earned her diploma while maintaining a job. The faculty unanimously selected her as the student speaker for the graduation ceremony where she delivered an inspiring speech to a crowd of over 1,000 people. Immediately following graduation, she enrolled at Florida Southwestern State College (FSW) and began her coursework to become a Physician’s Assistant (P.A.). At FSW she maintained a 3.81 GPA and was recognized by several professors as a leader in the classroom.

She enrolled in the NOVA Southeastern University – Fort Myers Nursing Program and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in December of 2019. She is currently studying for her Board of Nursing exams and hopes to start working in March in the ER at Health Park Hospital. Her future plans include continuing her education on a Master of Arts for Family or Critical Care Nurse Practitioner. Her ultimate goal is to open her own clinic as a P.A.

Along with being a full-time student and maintaining a job, Tabita dedicates much of her spare time each week volunteering with the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, and her local church.

“You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have.”

TABITA LEPINDEA

Adult Education/GED® Partners with CTE = Industry Certification and Employment

Joshua Thompson – Lake Technical College – Eustis, Florida

Joshua Collins Thompson came to Lake Technical College as a sixteen-year-old kid with Cystic Fibrosis, unsure of himself, and with no thoughts of a career or any direction in life. Born with a congenital disease, Josh deals with serious health and medical challenges every day. Abdominal pain and constant trips to the doctor and hospital, changes of medication, surgeries and special diets are all part of his normal routine. His health problems had made it impossible for him to finish high school. Additionally, because Joshua had missed so much school, he struggled with math concepts as well as reading comprehension.



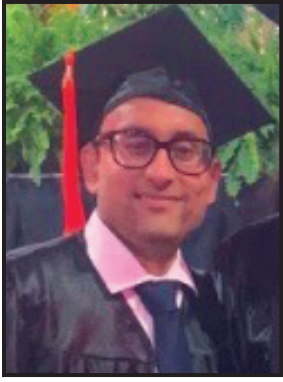
“Someone always has it harder than you. Keep that in mind as you keep moving onward. Live for today. You can’t change the past or be certain of the future.”

JOSHUA THOMPSON

After many months of academic preparation in the Adult Education program at Lake Technical College, Josh was enrolled in Air Conditioning, Refrigeration, and Heating (HVAC) as an Integrated Education and Training (IET) student. While his academics had improved, he was still struggling with math and reading, so he decided to embrace the undertaking of GED® preparation integrated with his HVAC curriculum.

In August 2018, Josh graduated from the HVAC 1 program while continuing his GED® preparation. Josh graduated in November 2018 as a mature and responsible young man, fully equipped with his high school diploma and certificate in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC). **Despite all of his health and academic challenges, Josh is now working as a commercial**

HVAC Technician; a testament to the impact that an adult education and workforce training program can have in making people successful and economically self-sufficient.



Adult Education Launches Special Needs Student to Industry Certifications and Employment

Mohammed Kassoo

Orange Technical College – Mid-Florida Campus ABE/GED® for the Deaf – Winter Garden, Florida

Mohammed Kassoo came to Orange Technical College Mid-Florida Campus in 2013. Mohammed is deaf and had received his special diploma from Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB) in St. Augustine.

Realizing the credential at FSDB would not provide the foundation for his continued education, he enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program for the Deaf at Orange

Technical College. In order to succeed in a technical program, he needed to improve his reading, language, and math levels. Not only did the adult education program allow him to achieve the academic skills he needed to succeed in a job preparatory program, Mohammed was also selected for the Adult Basic Education National Honor Society.

After several years of study, Mohammed was successful in meeting the requirements for his electronics program and received vocational certificates in Electronics Technology 1 & 2 from which he graduated in December 2018. Because of the adult education program he attended, Mohammed's academics improved to the point where he was able to achieve a Completers Certification for his technical program and State Certifications: Electronics Technician – International Society of Certified Electronics Technicians, and the IPC Soldering Certification required for Electronic assembly operations.

He is now employed by Lockheed Martin Corporation in Orlando as an Assistance Technician. Mohammed personifies the positive impact adult education, in partnership with career technical education, has on students of all abilities.

“My advice to all my Deaf peers is to never give up in school and don't look for excuses to be absent just because you have to work or it's too hard. Keep going until you reach your goal and succeed!!”

MOHAMMED KASSOO

Adult Education/GED® Transforms Dropout to Successfully Employed College Student

Jyanna Parker – Broward County Adult Education – Fort Lauderdale, Florida

While in high school, Jyanna Parker was tasked with caring for her nieces and nephews at home while everyone else in the family went to work to pay the bills. Unable to regularly attend school because of her family obligations, Jyanna eventually dropped out of high school in 11th grade. In October 2015, Jyanna was provided with an opportunity to reengage in school through the Out-of-School Youth (OSY)-WIOA Adult Grant. Through guidance and support from the OSY facilitators, Jyanna enrolled in the Broward County Adult Education GED® program.



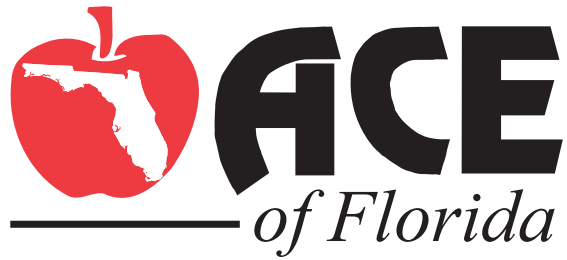
“I am confident with the woman that I am becoming. With the support of my family, Broward Schools, and the Out-of-School Youth program I was able to achieve my goals and find the perfect career pathway.”

JYANNA PARKER

While working on her GED® and continuing to care for her nieces and nephews, Jyanna completed a 600-hour paid work experience with the School Board of Broward County as a General Assistant in the Career, Technical, Adult and Community Education Department. Jyanna earned her GED® in four months and successfully completed her paid work experience. After her paid work experience ended, she was offered a position to continue working with the School Board of Broward County as a General Clerk I. She is currently employed at Broward County Public Schools as a Clerk Specialist II, receiving full-time benefits including contributing towards the Florida Retirement System.

Jyanna is now enrolled full-time at Broward College pursuing an AA degree in Human Resource Management with an anticipated December 2020 graduation. During her time at Broward College, she earned a Business Specialist Certificate, was inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success, and received several acknowledgements. Upon graduation, Jyanna plans to continue working with Broward schools and to enroll at Florida International University in pursuit of her bachelor's degree.

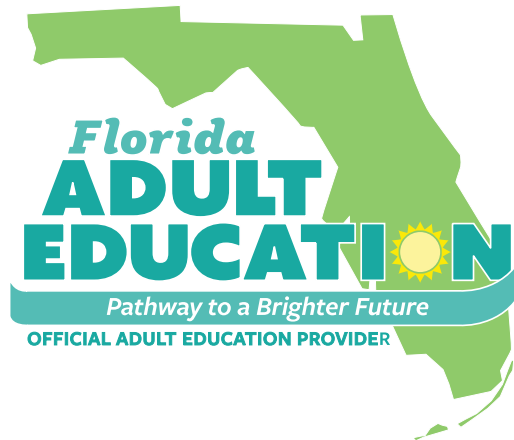
Jyanna credits the adult education program and its instructors for starting her path toward success. Jyanna is another outstanding example of the impact adult education has as a foundation for future success for the citizens of Florida.



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