



R-Ally: Research Allies for Lifelong Learning

Adult Learner Leadership in Education Services (ALLIES) Study

Preliminary Summary ~ March 2015

VALUEUSA believes that adult learner leadership can both improve adult education program services and boost adult learner outcomes. VALUEUSA defines adult learner leadership as adult learner involvement in all components of the adult education program and in every phase of its organization and function. Examples of adult learner leadership include programs that hire learners to serve in staff roles, establish roles for learners on program boards and committees, and train learners to become advocates and spokespersons for the program. VALUEUSA leadership training encourages adult learners to lead in advocacy, design of instructional services, mentoring, fundraising, and evaluation.

In 2014 VALUEUSA and Research Allies for Lifelong Learning designed a rigorous leadership study, Adult Learner Leadership in Education Services (ALLIES). Thanks to a generous grant from Dollar General Literacy Foundation, the ALLIES study is beginning to evaluate how adult learners can benefit a program as they pursue their own learning and leadership goals. Initially, programs in four states were selected at random as either participating or control programs, and baseline data were collected from both types of programs. Ten initial participating programs received VALUEUSA leadership training and mentoring support as they developed a learner-led project; five control programs continued to run their programs as usual. This summary shares preliminary results from the first 15 adult education programs visited between November 2014 and January 2015; data collection continues in 2015.

By the Numbers

States: Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, and Texas

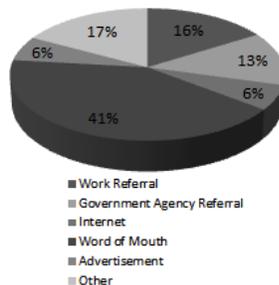
Participating (P) Programs: 10

Control (C) Programs: 5

Staff: 49

Adult Learners: 232

How Adult Learned about Center:



180 Females (78%)

52 Males (22%)

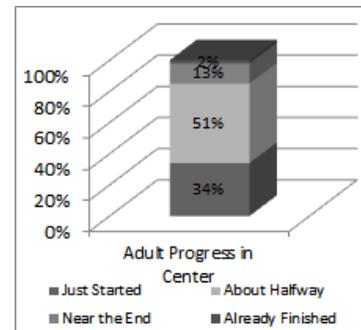
44 Native English Speakers (19%)

188 English language learners (81%)

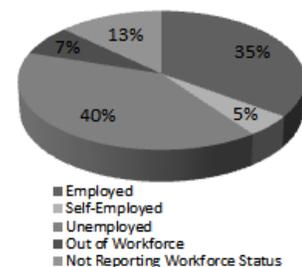
Adults with **Accommodations for Disabilities:** 20 (9%)

Median Age: (P) 30-34 Years (C) 40-44 Years

Median Highest Grade Completed: (P) 9th Grade, (C) 6th Grade



Employment Status:



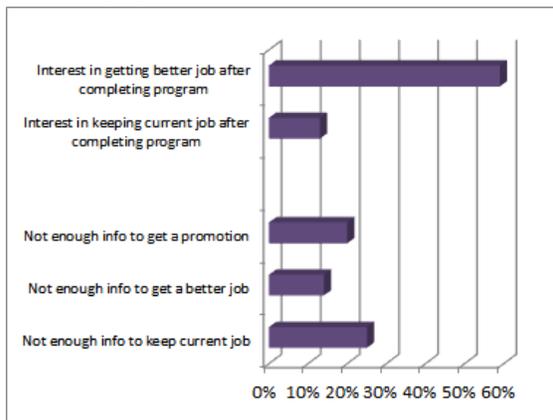
In Participating Centers:

- **Local support for centers was very high:** about 2/3 of adults affirmed that other adults knew about the center, 9 in 10 that other adults would be interested in the center and that they would recommend the center
- A center strength was one-on-one tutoring (mean 4.49 on a 5-point scale)
- **Teacher/tutor support was very high:**

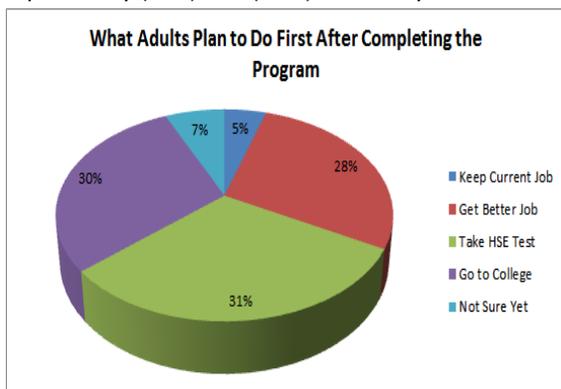


93% of adults counted on the teacher or tutor for support with problems; 92% thought their ideas and contributions mattered to the teacher/tutor; 97% affirmed motivation from the teacher/tutor

- Adults indicated **strong employment interest:** 13% to keep their current job and 59% to get a better job. Some adults indicated a need for more employment-related info from the center:

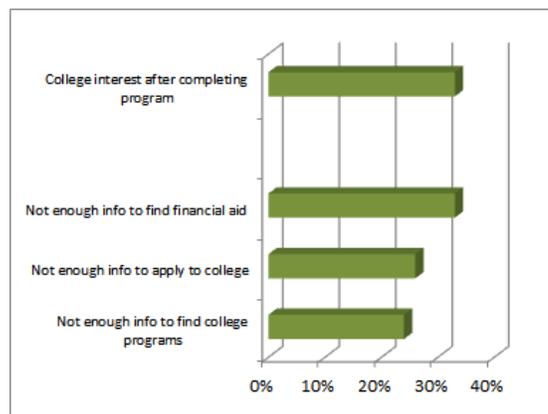


- After completing the program, adult learners frequently think they might go to college (62%), get a better job (59%), or take a high school equivalency (HSE) test (41%). First they would:

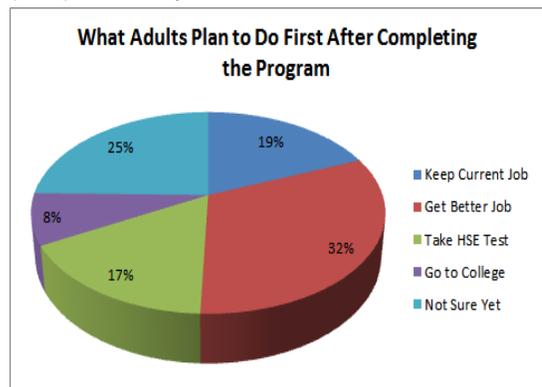


In Control Centers:

- **Local support for centers was very high:** about 3/4 of adults affirmed that other adults knew about the center, 9 in 10 that other adults would be interested in the center and that they would recommend the center
- A center strength was one-on-one tutoring (mean 4.72 on a 5-point scale) but 29% indicated this tutoring was not offered
- **Teacher/tutor support was very high:** 98% of adults counted on the teacher or tutor for support with problems and thought their input mattered to him/her; 97% affirmed motivation
- 21% perceived that computer instruction wasn't offered and 20% did not affirm that the center gave them enough info to use a computer
- One-third of adults indicated they might like to **go to college after completing the program**, yet some adults needed more info from the center:



- After completing the program, adult learners frequently think they might get a better job (52%), take an HSE test (35%), or go to college (33%). First they would:

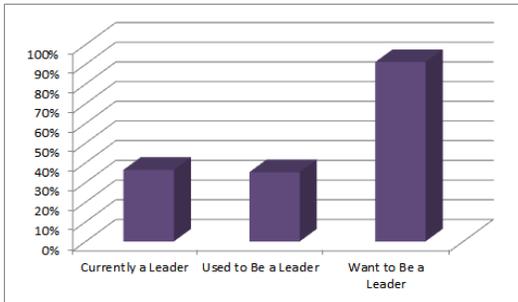


In Participating Centers:

- 19% believed accommodations for adults with disabilities were not offered in the center, and 17% that they did not have enough info from the center to get accommodations
- Adults most often believed **private** donations or foundations funded the center (40%); however, **38% did not know who funded their center**



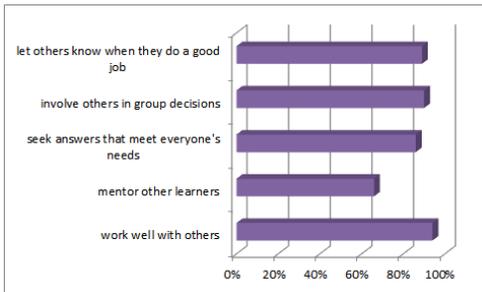
- **73% of adults did not know who made decisions** about changes in the program nor who implemented them
- 36% of adults see themselves as current leaders, 35% used to be, and 91% want to be leaders



- How adult learners rated themselves as leaders:

7 OUT OF 10 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

- Comfort with adult learner leadership was very high: adult learners saw themselves as being **comfortable with adult learners as leaders (80%), yet less comfortable** than they thought staff (85%) or other adult learners (89%) would be
- As leaders, adults especially affirmed working well with others (94%) and involving others in group decisions (90%)



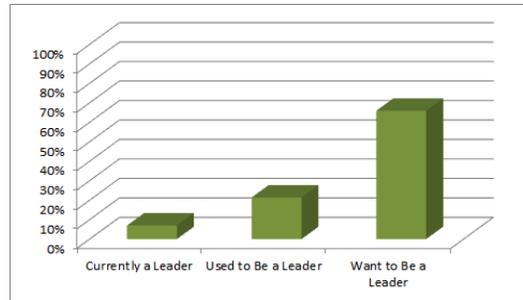
- They are prepared to give back: 90% to **family or friends**, 88% to mentors, 91% to **the center**, and 80% to their community

In Control Centers:

- 24% believed accommodations for adults with disabilities were not offered in the center
- Adults most often believed **private** donations or foundations funded the center (50%); however, **30% did not know who funded their center**



- **83% of adults did not know who made decisions** about changes in the program nor who implemented them
- 7% of adults see themselves as current leaders, 21% used to be, and 66% want to be leaders, at much lower rates than in participating centers

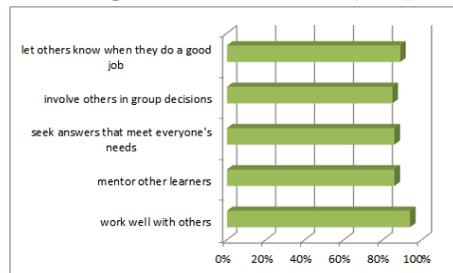


- Adults rated themselves an average of 6 out of 10 as leaders:



Comfort with adult learner leadership was very high: adult learners saw themselves as being **comfortable with adult learners as leaders (81%), yet less comfortable** than they thought staff (83%) or other adult learners (94%) would be

- As leaders, adults in control centers affirmed mentoring other learners more (86%)



- They are prepared to give back: 93% to **family or friends**, 87% to mentors, 82% to the center, and 88% to **their community**

Assessments:

The **Critical Thinking** assessment asked how often adult learners did something in the last 30 days: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), or always (5). Nearly all adults (n=228, or 98%) completed the critical thinking assessment.

This assessment consists of 7 scales with a total of 31 items. The average score for each scale is below, with the frequency in parentheses:

Reasoning	3.9 (often)
Enquiry	3.7 (often)
Information Processing	4.2 (often)
Flexibility	4.2 (often)
Evaluation	3.7 (often)
Problem Solving	3.9 (often)
Decision Making	4.0 (often)

Adult learners scored the highest on information processing and flexibility scales, on average (4.2). These average scale scores indicate generally frequent flexibility in dealing with decisions or tackling questions and overall high amounts of organizing and processing information.

They tended to score lowest on enquiry and evaluation (3.7), on average. These average scale scores indicate adults generally plan to get information and to evaluate issues and problems less often than they process information or exhibit flexibility in dealing with decisions or tackling questions.

The **Writing** assessment asked how adult learners write about their ideas. Instead of asking how often, it asked the extent to which they agreed that they wrote about their ideas in certain ways: fully disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4), or fully agree (5). Most adults (n = 196, or 84%) completed the writing assessment; those not completing it typically could not write in any language so were not given the assessment.

This assessment consists of 4 scales with a total of 31 items. The average score for each scale is below, with the extent of agreement in parentheses:

Metacognitive Strategy	3.8 (agree)
Capacity Belief	3.3 (neither agree nor disagree)
Checking Strategy	4.2 (agree)
Context Belief	3.9 (agree)

Using checking strategies in writing was the scale with which adult learners tended to agree most often (4.2). The high average scale score in checking strategy reflects the extent to which they use strategies to check their writing when they write about their ideas.

Adult learners tended to score lowest on the capacity belief scale (3.3). This scale measures the extent to which they believe they have enough capacity to write about their ideas coherently and without errors. The lower average scale scores indicate they have less faith in their capacity to write about their ideas than in their ability to use checking strategies.