

Technically Philly

City of Philadelphia Launches Online Adult Literacy Courses

Juliana Reyes | February 28, 2014

In Philadelphia, about 67 percent of adults seeking literacy courses in 2014 read at a 4th-8th grade level, according to data from the Commission, the government organization that oversees the city's adult literacy efforts. The courses are geared toward learners at that level.

The Mayor's Commission on Literacy launched free online courses for low-literate adults late last month. It's the first of its kind in the country, said Judith Renyi, executive director of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy.

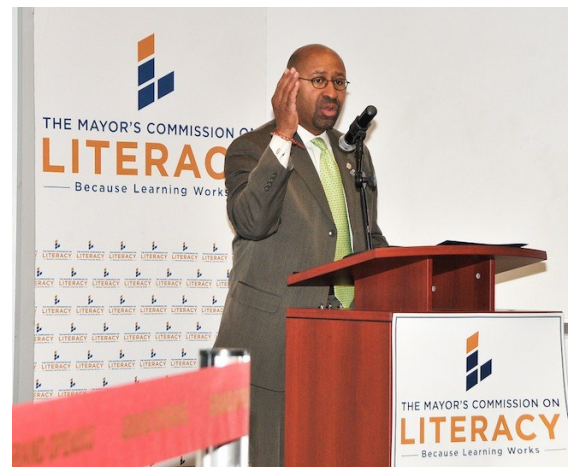
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The online model is one that's worked in higher education and that Renyi believes can work for adult literacy.

The online courses are a matter of convenience, Renyi said. Many adult students have full-time jobs and families and can't get to a literacy class offered at a local organization. Learners can take the online courses from any computer.

At-home Internet access is the biggest barrier with this model, Renyi said, and that's why they ask students to write a learning plan that includes what computer they'll use — whether it's at a library, a computer lab or a community center.

It's also not built to teach thousands of adults: The two six-week classes have to be small (the first cohort is a group of 13) because of the emphasis on discussion. The courses ask each student to watch videos and read texts, write a response, and then respond to their classmates' responses. The course facilitator makes sure that everyone is participating.

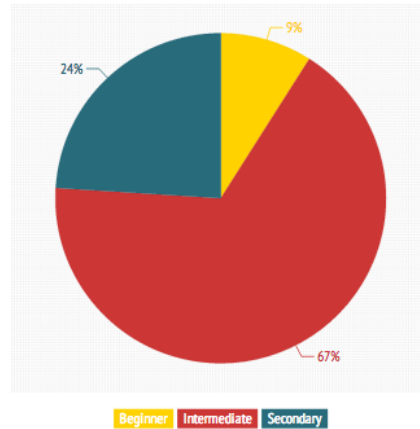


Mayor Nutter at the grand opening of the Commission on Literacy's online adult education courses. Photo courtesy of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy.

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City of Philadelphia Launches Online Adult Literacy Courses (continued)

Literacy levels of 94 adults seeking literacy courses



Source: Mayor's Commission on Literacy, 2014 data, Philadelphia



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Out of 94 Philadelphians who took the city's placement test for literacy courses, 67 percent scored in the intermediate level, meaning they read at a 4th-8th grade level. Learners who are at the secondary level can start preparing for the GED, said Judith Renyi, head of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy. Renyi said that though this is a small sample size, she believes it's representative of adults in Philadelphia.

Before they can begin the first six-week reading and writing course, learners must first take an introductory course that teaches them digital skills, resume and job-finding techniques and what to expect with the online course. They take that course in-house, at one of the Commission's partner organizations, so a teacher can help them if necessary.

The Commission also plans to launch an online math course.

View this article at http://technical.ly/philly/2014/03/24/mayors-commission-literacy-launches-countrys-first-online-adult-learning-courses/?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TechnicallyPhilly+%