



Community schools open enrollment for adult ed courses

Al Dia | Emily Neil | March 22, 2018



The Mayor's Office of Education (MOE) has teamed up with the city's Office of Adult Education (OAE) to offer adult education classes, including four ESL classes, this spring at all 12 of the community schools across the city.

The classes are currently open for enrollment through the [OAE website](#) or on location through the end of March. ESL classes will be offered at George Washington High School, South Philadelphia High School, Southwark School, and William T. Tilden School, and courses for either adult basic education or adult secondary education will be provided at other community schools, which include William Cramp Elementary, Murrell Dobbins CTE High, F.S. Edmonds Elementary, Edward Gideon Elementary, Kensington Health Sciences, Logan Elementary, Samuel Gompers Elementary, and Alain Locke School.

"The vision for community schools is that they are places that provide a range of things that help meet the needs of the community," said Susan Gobreski, director of community schools at the Mayor's Office of Education, noting that the new initiative is expected to serve 300 people total, with an average of 25 people in one class at each of the 12 locations.

Starting in 2016, Philadelphia's community schools' coordinators discovered that adult education was a need highlighted at each location according to on-site assessments aimed at determining what services the communities themselves identified as important and lacking in their immediate areas.

"The partnership [with OAE] really allows us to focus on how do we use this new opportunity to expand something that Philadelphians need," Gobreski said.

Adult education resources were cited by the city's new workforce initiative, Fueling Philadelphia's Talent Engine, announced in February, as one of the key priorities in better preparing Philadelphians for employment and lowering the city's poverty level of 26 percent — the highest of any major city in the U.S.

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Diane Inverso, OAE executive director, noted that adult education “always seems to be a primary need in the community.”

For the community school courses, Inverso said that the OAE is working with providers — including the Center for Literacy, the Community Learning Center, and the Lutheran Settlement House — that are familiar with each community’s neighborhoods so that they are able to bring a deeper understanding of each community’s context to the design and implementation of the courses.

“Our providers have been working hard with us and with [the community school] coordinators in each school, along with principals, but I think what is really important to us right now is to get the word out for recruitment. It’s important for the community to know that these are free classes they can come out for, and they have the opportunity to get some kind of instruction, and this can be instruction even for folks who have high school diplomas,” Inverso said.

“There’s the need and then there’s the demand,” she continued. “It’s very different than when dealing with children. The demand is not quite the same because you have adults that have other things that get in the way in their lives,” Inverso added, explaining that education can fall by the wayside for some adults burdened with other responsibilities, like working long hours or caring for young children or sickly parents.

Inverso said that those individuals who seek to enroll in a class at a community school and do not qualify for whatever level that location is offering will then be referred to one of the Office of Adult Education’s *myPLACE*SM campuses to register for other courses the OAE makes available to city residents.

The OAE and MOE plan to use student assessments to fine tune the program for future classes as they look ahead to providing another set of courses in the fall.

Inverso noted that there are times when adults may need to take adult education courses even if they already have gotten a high school or high school-equivalent diploma.

“It’s not just the idea of prepping for the high school equivalency, it’s to help people develop the skills they need to be successful,” Inverso said.