Iowa Department of Education

News Release

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Gov. Reynolds proclaims Sept. 24-30 lowa Adult Education and Family Literacy Week

Increasing the number of lowans with credentials needed for in-demand jobs is key to Future Ready lowa success

Governor Kim Reynolds has signed a proclamation recognizing Sept. 24-30 as Iowa Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.

The week, which coincides with the National Adult Education and Literacy Week, shines a light on the work lowa's adult education and literacy programs do in helping lowans achieve the skills and training needed for college and careers.

According to the National Coalition for Literacy, more than 36 million adults struggle with basic literacy and 60 million lack basic math skills. Additionally, data from the Future Ready Iowa Metrics that Matter report indicate that Iowans who lack education or training beyond high school are more likely to be unemployed, working low-wage jobs, and living in poverty than those with higher levels of education. Currently, more than 171,000 adults across the state lack high school diplomas.

The state's 15 regional adult education and literacy programs, which are overseen by the lowa Department of Education, address these disparities by providing non-credit instruction in adult basic education, adult secondary education, English as a second language, and other training to help adult learners improve their education and skill levels to meet employer demands and secure living-wage jobs. These opportunities are also integral to the Future Ready lowa initiative, which calls for 70 percent of lowans to have education or training beyond high school by 2025.

"lowa's adult education and literacy programs are life-changing for the nearly 18,000 students who are served each year," lowa Department of Education Director Ryan Wise said. "Many of these adults face significant barriers to employment. Our programs and partners provide the extra support they need to gain the education and skills necessary to succeed in college and careers."

Last year, 4,690 students were enrolled in Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Programs (HiSET and/or ESL) at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC). Eric Sundermeyer, DMACC's Associate Director of Adult Education and Literacy, said 3,141 of those students attended for more than 12 hours of instruction and were accountable in the state achievement system – including 1,624 HiSET and 1,517 ESL students.

"I truly admire the courage, dedication, and resilience displayed by our HiSET and ESL students every time they walk in the door," said Sundermeyer. "It is awesome for our team of faculty and coaches to see them experience success and help them with that next step – whether advancing in their career or continuing their education."

He said, so far this program year, 1,790 have enrolled in DMACC's AEL programming. Fifty-six percent of those students are between the ages of 18 and 34, and overall 60 percent are female and 40 percent male.

"With lowa's Adult Education and Family Literacy Week taking place, there is no better time for students without their high school diploma to join us as our Bridges to Success partnership with the United Way of Central lowa now allows for free classes, textbooks, testing and support from their very own Career Coach," said Sundermeyer. "To any of you considering a return to the classroom, reach out as we'd love to talk with you about our upcoming sessions at DMACC."

The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which was passed in 2014, requires states to seamlessly deliver integrated job-driven services, including postsecondary education and training, to help those with significant barriers to employment earn marketable credentials to secure high-quality jobs and careers.

For more information about lowa's adult education and literacy programs, visit the lowa Department of Education's <u>website</u>. In addition, the Your Future Starts Here <u>website</u> features student success stories and provides resources to help lowans start the path to earning high school equivalency diplomas, head to college, or launch their careers.

For more information on Adult Education and Literacy programs at DMACC, contact 287-8700 or visit www.dmacc.edu/ael.

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