Adult Transitions to Learning in the USA: What Do PIAAC Survey Results Tell Us?

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Taking the Next Step With PIAAC: A Research-to-Action Conference
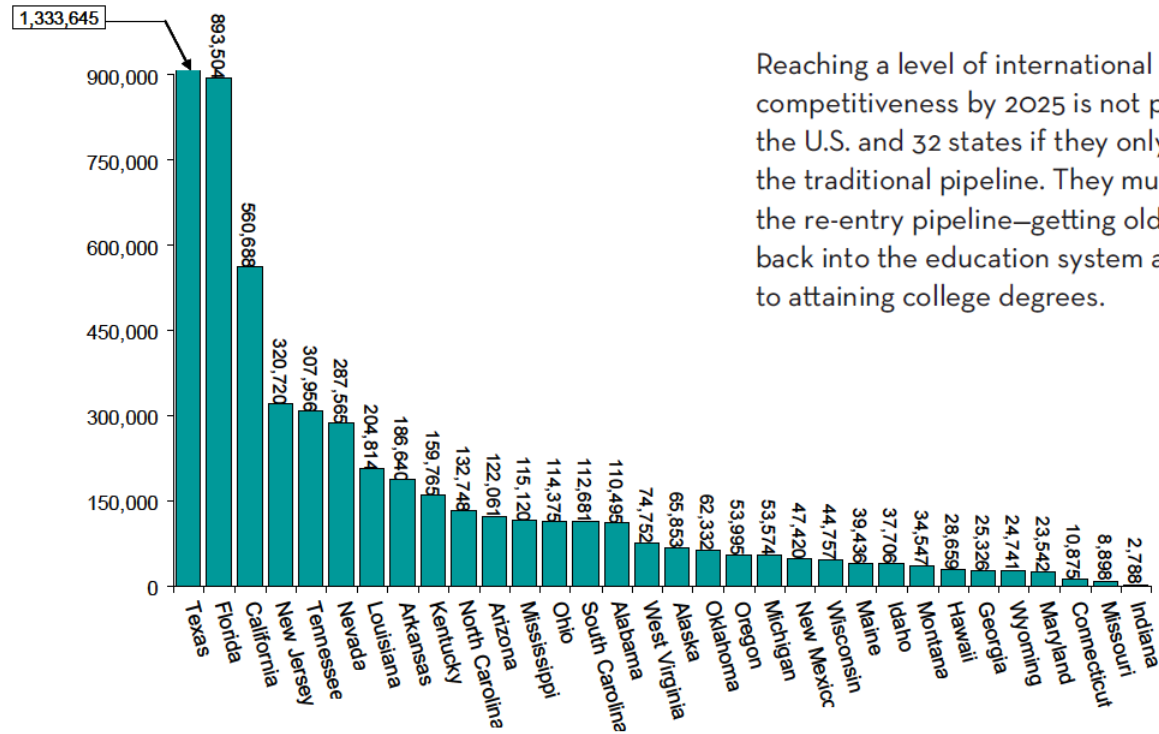
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Overview

❖ Context for PIAAC findings

❖ Key findings from the research

❖ Implications of the findings for policy and practice

❖ Recommendations for future research

Context for PIAAC Findings

Figure 12. Degree Shortfall in States Without Educating Adults

Reaching a level of international competitiveness by 2025 is not possible for the U.S. and 32 states if they only focus on the traditional pipeline. They must rely on the re-entry pipeline—getting older adults back into the education system and on track to attaining college degrees.

NCHEMS and JFF, Adding it Up, 2007
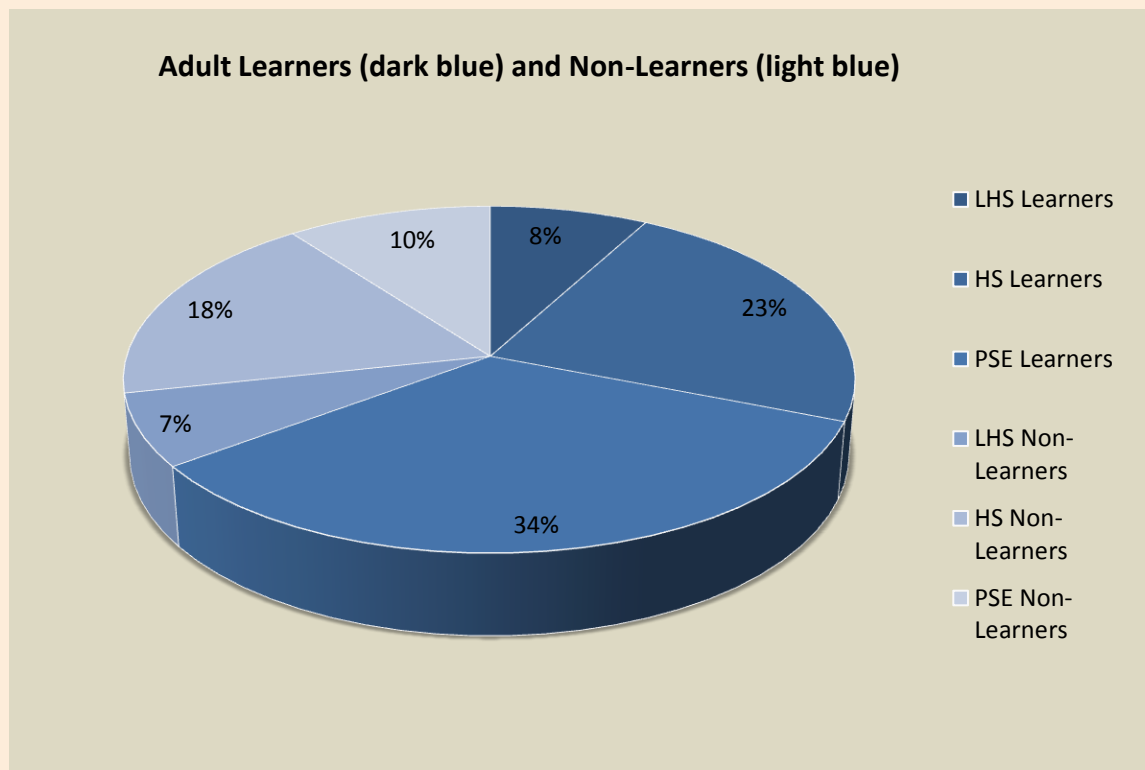
Context for PIAAC Findings

- Literacy Mean (USA) = **270** (1.0); (Intl) = 273

- Numeracy Mean (USA) = **253** (1.2); (Intl) = 269

- PSTRE Mean (USA) = **277** (1.1); (Intl) = 283

- US averages at **Level 2**

- 36 million US adults have low skills (below Level 2)

- 3 million with low skills would have liked to participate in adult education/training but didn't

Context for PIAAC Findings

- We defined Learners as those who reported formal or non-formal learning in the 12 months before PIAAC assessment; adults who reported participating in neither are described as Non-Learners

- We classified adults into 3 categories based on the highest education level they reported: Less than High School (LHS), High School (HS), and Postsecondary (PSE)

- An estimated 80 million LHS and HS adults are in the pool for formal education: 48.3 million LHS and HS adults are Non-Learners; an additional 31.2 million LHS and HS Learners pursue only non-formal learning

Key PIAAC Findings

Adult Learners and Non-Learners by Highest Education Level

Adult Learners (dark blue) and Non-Learners (light blue)

Legend:
- LHS Learners
- HS Learners
- PSE Learners
- LHS Non-Learners
- HS Non-Learners
- PSE Non-Learners

Pie chart values: 8%, 23%, 34%, 7%, 18%, 10%

Key PIAAC Findings

Adult Learner and Non-Learner Demographics by Highest Education Level

Characteristic	Learners			Non-Learners		
	LHS (%)	HS (%)	PSE (%)	LHS (%)	HS (%)	PSE (%)
Region: Northeast	10.8	27.8	61.4	12.1	51.4	36.5
Region: Midwest	12.5	37.0	50.6	14.3	53.7	32.0
Region: South	13.8	35.5	50.7	23.4	54.9	21.7
Region: West	10.9	39.8	49.3	22.6	42.6	34.9
Median Age (in years)	16-19	30-34	40-44	45-49	45-49	45-49
Gender: Female	44.7	48.6	53.4	49.4	50.1	58.1
Income: Low	91.8	63.2	32.2	82.0	63.9	43.9
Partner Status: Single	75.4	44.6	22.7	31.7	21.4	22.9
Median Household Size	4	3	3	3	3	3
Difficulty Seeing	10.2	9.6	7.4	27.7	14.6	12.7
Difficulty Hearing	7.0	7.5	7.2	12.4	12.5	8.8
Learning Disabilities	13.1	8.5	4.9	17.0	8.6	6.4

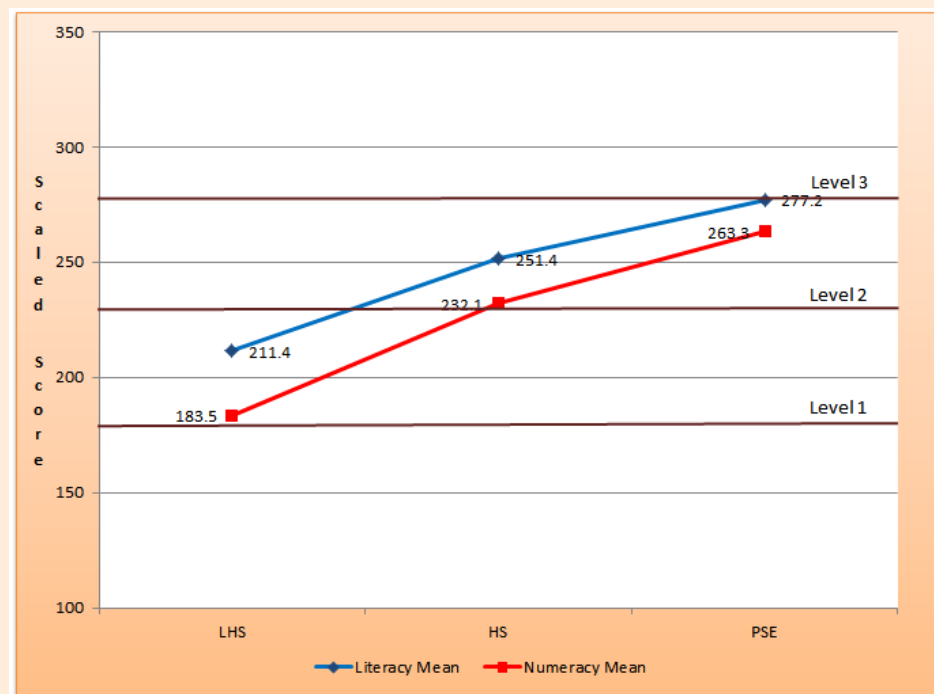*Applying research to support adult educators and learners*

Key PIAAC Findings

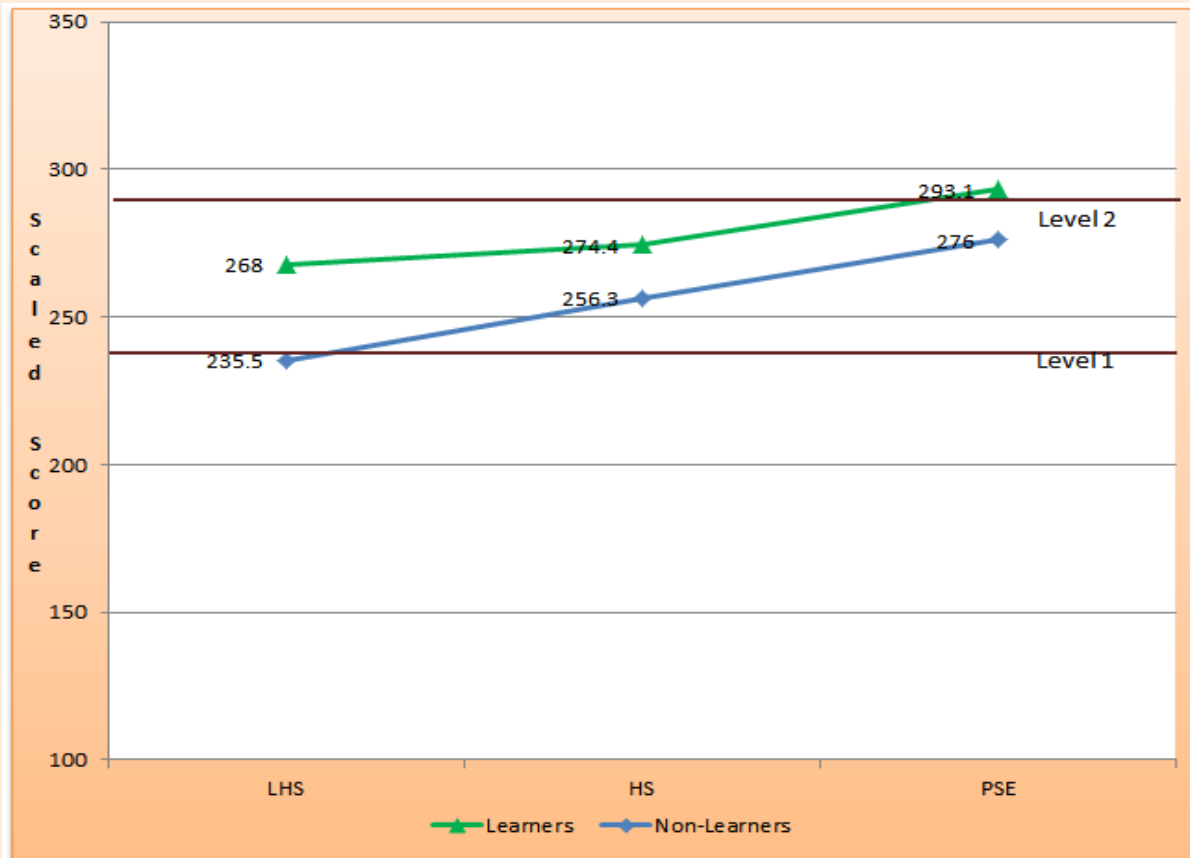## Mean Scores on PIAAC Assessments by Highest Education Level and Learner Status

Learners
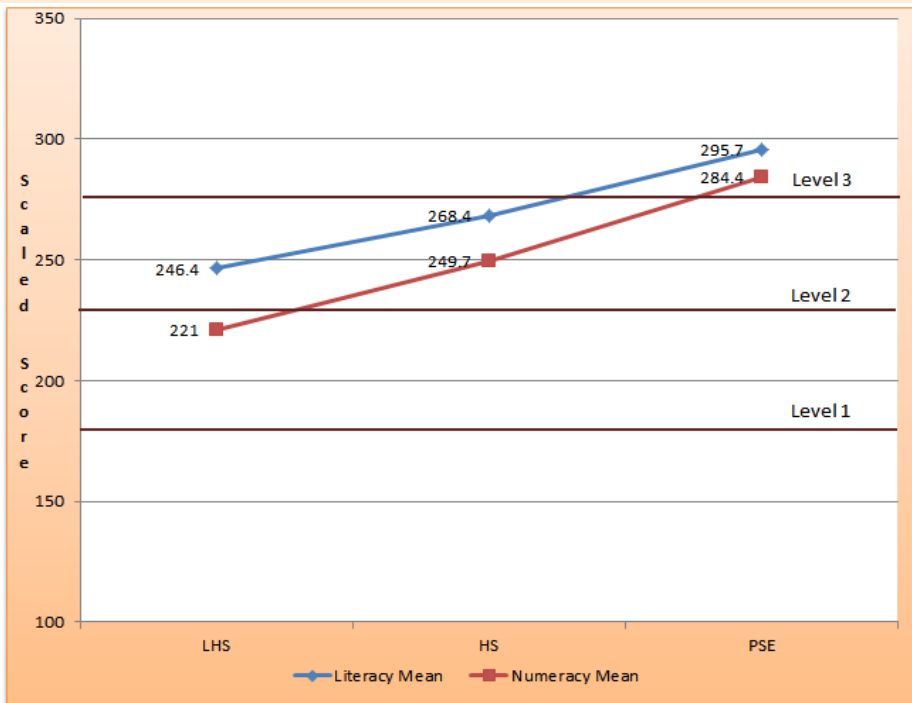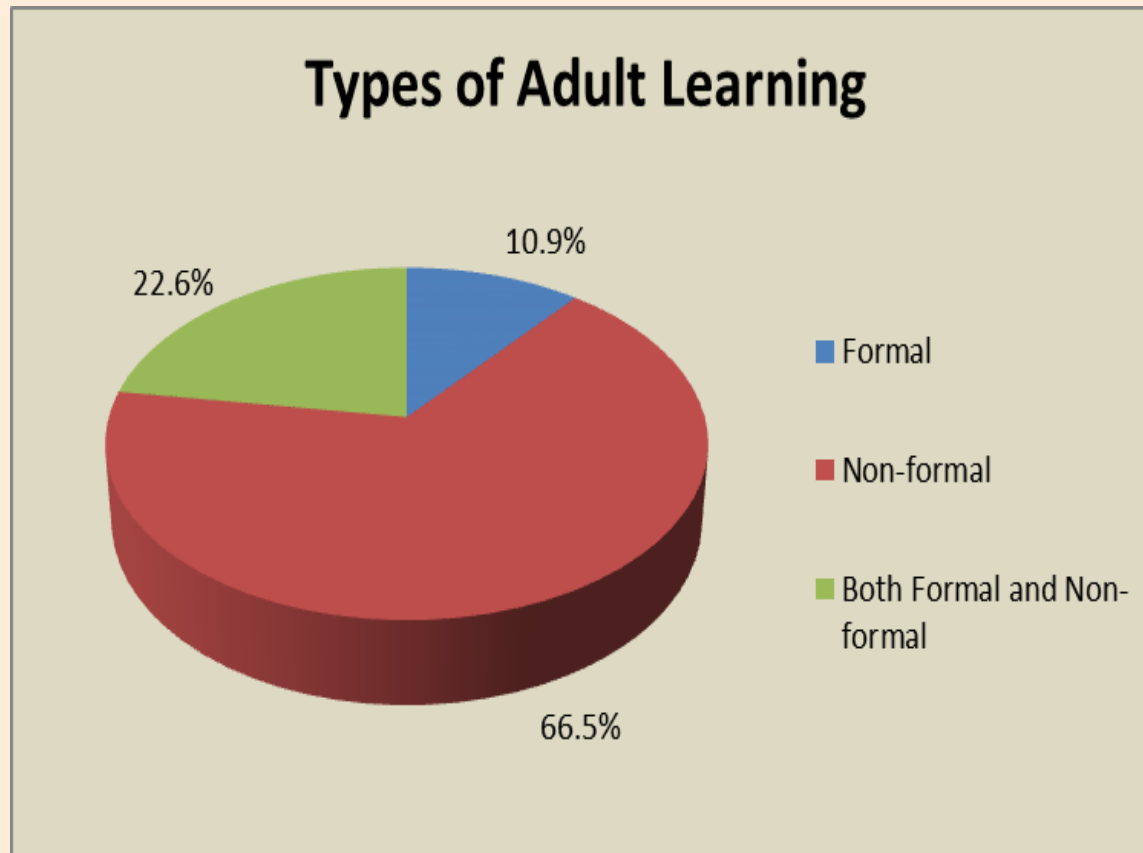

Non-Learners

Key PIAAC Findings
Mean Scores on PSTRE by Highest Education Level and Learner Status

Key PIAAC Findings

Types of Adult Learning

10.9%

22.6%

66.5%

- Formal
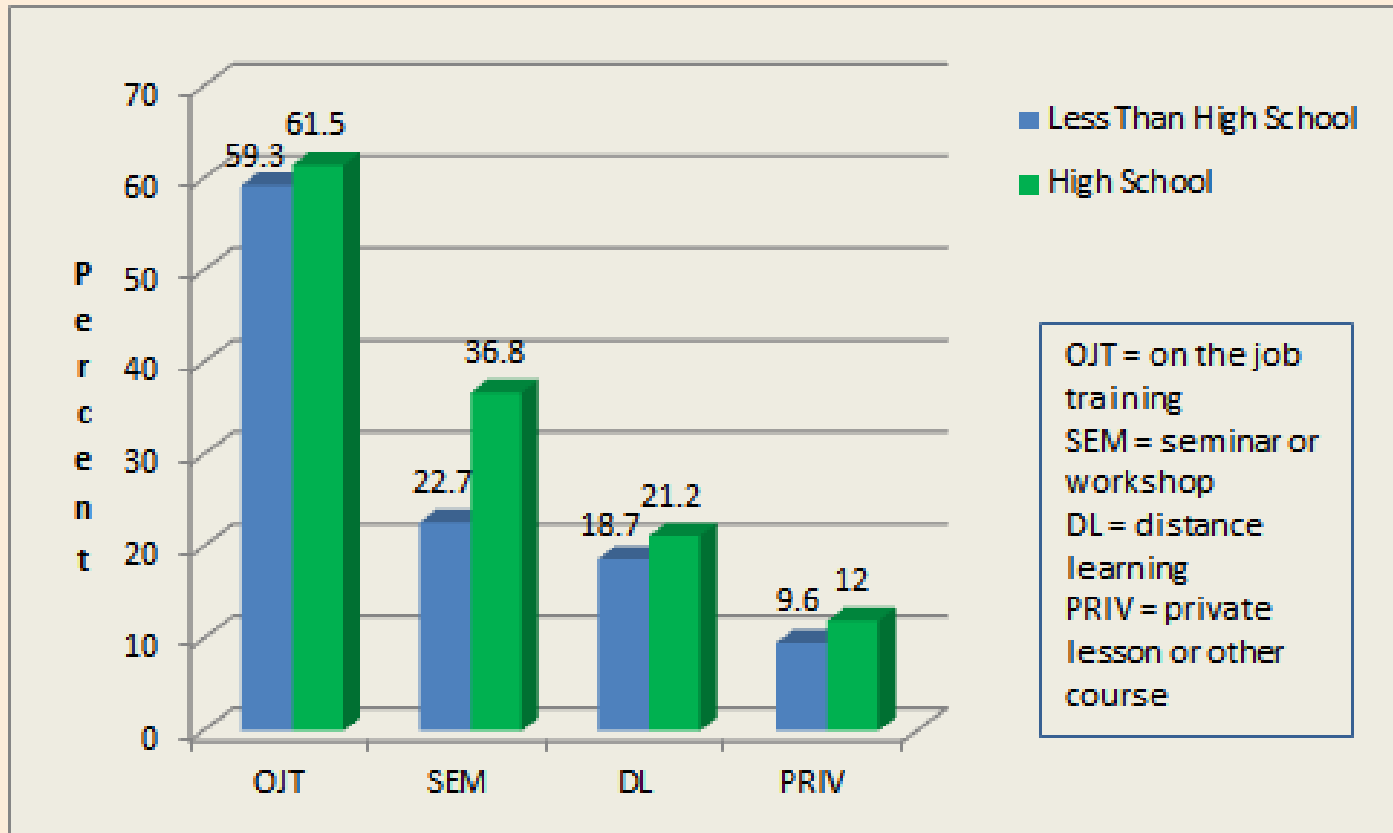- Non-formal
- Both Formal and Non-formal

Key PIAAC Findings

Adult Learner and Non-Learner Employment Characteristics by Highest Education Level

Status	Learners			Non-Learners		
	LHS %	HS%	PSE%	LHS %	HS%	PSE%
Employed	49.2	79.0	88.3	54.6	61.1	63.8
Unemployed	19.2	8.5	4.1	6.9	9.6	8.4
Out of Labor Force	31.6	12.5	7.6	38.5	29.3	27.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
On Permanent Disability	0.9	1.8	1.2	17.0	10.8	7.9
Is Not Employed, in Education, or Training (NEET)	9.2	11.0	7.2	45.4	38.9	36.2
Employer Sector: Private	83.3	76.4	63.0	93.1	87.0	81.0
Employer Size: Median Number Employed	11-50 People	11-50 People	51-200 People	11-50 People	11-50 People	11-50 People
Job Satisfaction: Extremely Satisfied or Satisfied	78.7	75.4	82.1	79.1	76.5	78.0
Employed with Single Employer	90.1	87.0	86.5	95.5	89.3	86.4
Employed and Stayed with Same Employer for 5 Years	55.0	41.9	42.6	61.7	61.5	52.6
Employed and Is A Manager	15.9	31.3	40.8	20.8	26.1	35.7

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Key PIAAC Findings

Adult Learner Methods of Non-formal Learning by Highest Education Level

Legend:
- Less Than High School
- High School

OJT = on the job training
SEM = seminar or workshop
DL = distance learning
PRIV = private lesson or other course

Data values:
- OJT: 59.3, 61.5
- SEM: 22.7, 36.8
- DL: 18.7, 21.2
- PRIV: 9.6, 12

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Key PIAAC Findings

Employer Support for Formal or Non-Formal Learning by Highest Education Level
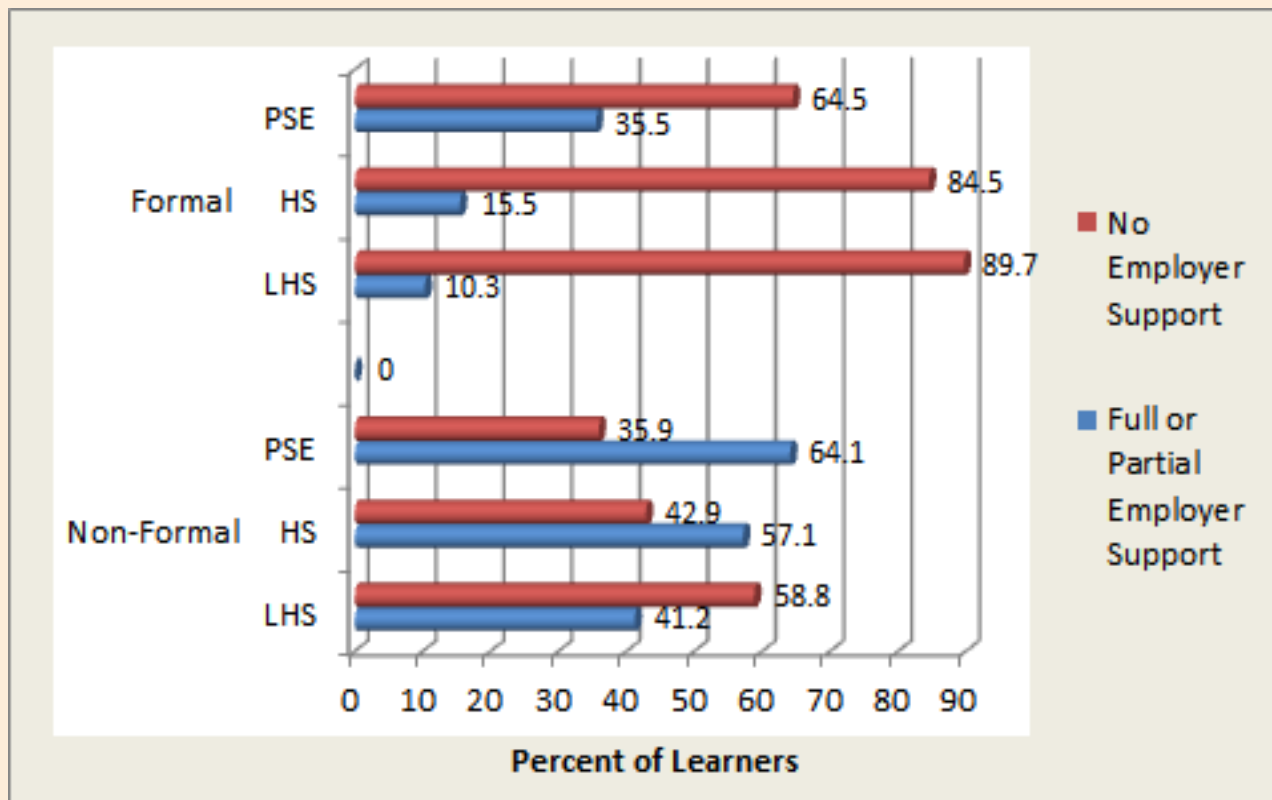
Implications of the Findings

The gap in access and support has critical implications for policy makers, formal and non-formal adult and continuing education, and the workplace

Policy Makers

- Postsecondary institutions need to review policies on formal and non-formal learning that could impact prospective non-traditional adult learners with low education levels – especially low-income adults, men who become disengaged from learning, and adults with LD
- Federal and state financial aid programs need to provide designated funding or expand existing funding opportunities to include part-time adult learners
- To eliminate disability-related barriers to PSE, full and speedy access to accommodations is needed for diagnosed adult learners
- Incentives by federal and state government to employers are needed to support adult learning that is job related
- Policies are needed that support small businesses to provide workplace training or external educational benefits

Implications of the Findings

Adult and Continuing Education Could:

- Recruit LHS and HS Learners for formal postsecondary learning by pointing to the benefits for their careers and their families
- Provide support for formal learning to LHS and HS Learners who delayed beginning formal learning (while negotiating life barriers or saving up funds)
- Collaborate with employers to get more instruction during work hours and more tuition costs covered
- Offer programs that combine academic instruction and workplace learning so that adults get both learning and workplace experience
- Take advantage of employee mobility by connecting with employers to provide training for new employees or by connecting directly with transitioning employees who see the value of learning
- Provide interventions involving technology and learning in response to adults' low PSTRE skill levels

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Implications of the Findings

Workplaces Could:

- Make learning more accessible for employees at all education levels and in all income brackets
- Establish programs to encourage more women to participate in non-formal learning and more men with low education levels to pursue formal studies
- Provide adequate release time to facilitate learning for employees who have little or no postsecondary experience
- Establish employer-employee taskforces to tackle common barriers such as inconvenient times/locations, work demands, costs, and family responsibilities
- Encourage experienced, highly educated employees to mentor and coach younger, less established employees toward more learning and even greater engagement in the workplace

Recommendations for Future Research

Skill Levels

- Focus on a deeper investigation of skill levels in Literacy, Numeracy, and PSTRE for subpopulations identified within PIAAC

- Look further into the relationship of Literacy and Numeracy skill levels with learning

- Examine skill levels of LHS and HS adults beyond the age of compulsory school attendance

- Investigate how skill levels differ for non-native English speakers who are Learners or Non-Learners

- Investigate PSTRE skill levels and Distance Learning (further insights into how to raise PSTRE skills and expand the use of DL)

Non-Learners

- Study Non-Learners at greater depth, to understand possible ways to motivate them toward learning and retain them once they start

Recommendations for Future Research

<u>Formal Learning</u>

- Identify successful formal education models that are designed with the needs of low-income adult learners in mind, in terms of age and gender. These models need to address potential barriers of low skills, low income, scheduling, and disabilities
- Effective models offering comprehensive services for adult learners need further research; services may include specialized advising, study skills workshops, compressed or accelerated course formats, childcare, and opportunities to network with other adult learners

<u>Non-Formal Learning Related to Workplace</u>

- Explore the relationship between job satisfaction and learning qualitatively (how satisfaction with jobs relates to a need for learning in the workplace)

<u>Role of Family in Learning</u>

- Investigate parental characteristics, backgrounds, and skill levels
- Conduct deeper study of the relationships of family composition and household size to formal learning

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Contact Information

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