

Student Success Stories



Helping Nevada adults improve basic skills and get jobs through GED, Career Pathways, Literacy, ESL, Civics, Citizenship, & Transition to Postsecondary programs. Nevada Adult Education services are federally funded through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act.

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Poster child for perseverance



Armed with some work experience and a technical degree as an executive secretary from Mexico, Laura Shepard moved to the United States 11 years ago. “My first job was a housekeeper. It was an honest job but it is a very hard job. I decided if I’m going to be a housekeeper, I will be the best. And within three months I got promoted to a housekeeping supervisor! This made me feel confident — that I could do a little bit more than that.

“In 2003 I enrolled in [Western Nevada Community College’s Adult Literacy and Language Program](#), where I began taking English classes for beginners. During this time I was working in my house as a babysitter. Juggling school, work, and family, I began the studying at home to obtain my citizenship, which I did in 2006.”

In 2007 Laura began studying for the GED® exam and took the test near the end of the year. “I didn’t pass any of it, but I don’t think it was because I didn’t know the test. I believe it was because I didn’t know the language.” So she went to the Carson City Library’s ESL In-Home Program, studying one-on-one with “these wonderful people who do not expect anything from you but help you to learn the language and be successful in life.”

Her improved speaking skills landed her a job as a customer service agent with Nevada Check-up, the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program. “I was happy, I was succeeding, and I was doing something that I always wanted to do — be a bilingual person. But, like in life, everything is unexpected. One day, due to the economy, my position was eliminated. I was transferred to the Medicaid State Recovery unit. I learned that processing and archiving files was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. If I wanted to move forward I needed to go to school to keep learning.”

In spring 2011, Laura enrolled in WNC’s GED Boot Camp, six weeks of focused, arduous work. “My husband and kids supported my efforts and my boss allowed me to flex my time. ‘Go for it!’ she said!”

Laura found the first two weeks of class easy. Then things got complicated. “I felt like I was a little donkey climbing a little peak with two heavy sacks on my back. I looked straight and just kept moving. At the end of the sixth week of Boot Camp, I was done, completely done. My brain was like a frying pan with hot oil bubbling and I felt it was ready to explode.” She took the test at the end of May and passed all subjects except math.

“I felt very disappointed, tired, and embarrassed. I felt like I didn’t respond to all the support I had and it was time to cover up, give up, and I did. But at the end of the year I received a phone call from Mrs. Andrade. She told me that they have a new math teacher, Marie Johnson. She thought I might be interested in taking classes with her. For the moment, I hesitated. I didn’t need the GED, I have a job and even though I didn’t like it, it was a job. I was doing good, there was no reason to obtain the GED. But then I just said, ‘Yes, I’ll be there again.’

“In the middle of 2012 I started Math classes again. These classes were very intense but our group was small and we had the opportunity to work with our teacher Marie one-on-one. I will always be very thankful for all the teachers I had during this journey,” said Laura. “They were very patient. Teaching adults is not the same as teaching kids. Kids are like a little sponges. We adults, with our responsibilities and lives, take more time to assimilate what we are learning. Especially with English as a second language. Anyway, after all this hard work and patient teacher, I didn’t pass, again. This time I got mad, I said to myself, ‘You are a loser!’ I closed my books, I closed my mind, and I ignored everything.

“Then one day a beautiful bird knocked on my window with a little note that said ‘YOU WILL MAKE ME SO PROUD IF YOU FINISH YOUR GED.’” The “bird” was Laura’s mother-in-law, a constant source of encouragement.

“The next morning I phoned Ms. Angela Andrade and said. ‘Help me please.’ We set up a meeting and came up with a plan. With the direction of my instructors, much diligence, perseverance, study, and the continued support of my family, I was able to climb the huge math rock and in October 2012 I shouted out ‘Victory!’”

“I didn’t know that while I was climbing that path to the GED I was forming my muscles.”

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Manuel enjoys payoff for hard work



Former ESL Student Manuel Rodriguez recently asked [Great Basin College's Adult Education program](http://www.gbcnv.edu/alc/) (www.gbcnv.edu/alc/) if he could speak to their current students. He wanted to encourage others with his success story.

He enrolled in the ESL program in 1995. Classes were non-existent then, so Sue Bettles (since retired) tutored him one-on-one; she also became his mentor. Manuel told the students he was doing custodial work at three companies — Cimarron West Restaurant, Kmart, and Albertsons Supermarket — all while working with Sue. He took his schooling seriously and attended regularly. To this day he remembers Sue telling him to “try and spend some time listening to English on a regular basis.”

“At first,” he said, “I let that advice slide.” But realizing he wasn’t improving his language skills, he began listening to English regularly, often using TV captioning where he could listen and read along.

As he studied and improved his English, he gained confidence and got his GED®. Today he is the manager at the Walmart store in Elko. And GBC’s program now offers classes in ESL, adult basic education, GED preparation, and U.S. citizenship in Winnemucca, Owyhee, and Pahrump, as well as in Elko.

**“Think out of the box,
learn all you can,
and don’t stop.”**

Nora and Lucy step up to success

*By Great Basin College ESL Student Khairina Jakamartana
ABE/ESL Students Newsletter, Sept-Oct 2013*

The United States of America is the land of opportunity and immigrants. People come from different countries to obtain opportunities for a better life. Some people already have the skills and abilities to speak and to write in English, the national language of the USA; therefore, it is much easier for them to get a good job. However, some of the newcomers realize that they lack English skills and have to learn more.

Are you struggling learning English? Come to the English as a Second Language (ESL)/Adult Basic Education (ABE) Center! The program will help you to reach your dream. Do you believe it? Here are two excellent examples of students who have proved it.

They are Nora Cervantes and Licelda (Lucy) Mejía (shown left to right). Nora didn’t speak any English when she arrived in Elko 17 years ago. She never thought she would receive education in this town. At first, she needed to learn English to be able to communicate with the doctor due to her daughter’s illness. After she was involved with the ESL program, she felt hungry to learn more. She began at the basic level — now she is in the advanced class. Nora has been studying seriously and has gained much progress. She used to avoid meeting and talking with her husband’s friends because she felt her English was not good enough; now she is very confident using English in her social life. “ESL is part of my life,” said Nora.

Lucy is another great student, especially proud of studying in the program. Even though she had been living in the USA since 1981, her English was weak. “My new life started with learning proper English,” said the single mother of two daughters. Lucy is very happy with her current job as a blackjack dealer at the Red Lion Casino, where she now can easily communicate with her clients. However, she wants to be an educated lady, and one day become a prominent cosmetologist.

Nora and Lucy have a lot in common: they both came from Mexico, they both received the GBC President’s Award for their achievements, and they were the first two recipients of scholarships provided by the ESL program last year. How great!

Site Administrator Trudy Gilbertson agreed: “All our staff and teachers are very impressed with the efforts of the students! They are able to use good English in everyday situations and improve their jobs studying with us!”

So, if you study hard and are committed to taking at least 50 hours of learning every semester, it is not impossible for you also. You could follow in Nora and Lucy’s footsteps. Good luck!

Editor’s note: The scholarships are intended to encourage advanced students to enter college classes. They are funded through collaborative agreements with the GBC ABE/ESL Department. Khairina continues studying in GBC’s Adult Education program. She is also taking college classes and was recently awarded the ESL scholarship for spring 2014.



Perseverance (Continued from page 1)

At the age of 38, with a family and full-time job, Laura met her math challenge and got her GED, but she’s not through. “I’m a public employee and I need to continue my education path. I must improve my writing skills; so I’ll be taking my classes through the college. I want to encourage everyone to finish their GED. There is no other way to succeed for ourselves, our family, and community.”