



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY



APLU

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY UNIVERSITIES
AWARDS PROGRAM

CASE
STUDY
2019

IEP CATEGORY • TALENT

**Wayne State University: Advancing
Access for Marginalized Communities -
Harris Literacy Program**

ABOUT THE HARRIS LITERACY PROGRAM

HARRIS LITERACY PROGRAM 2018

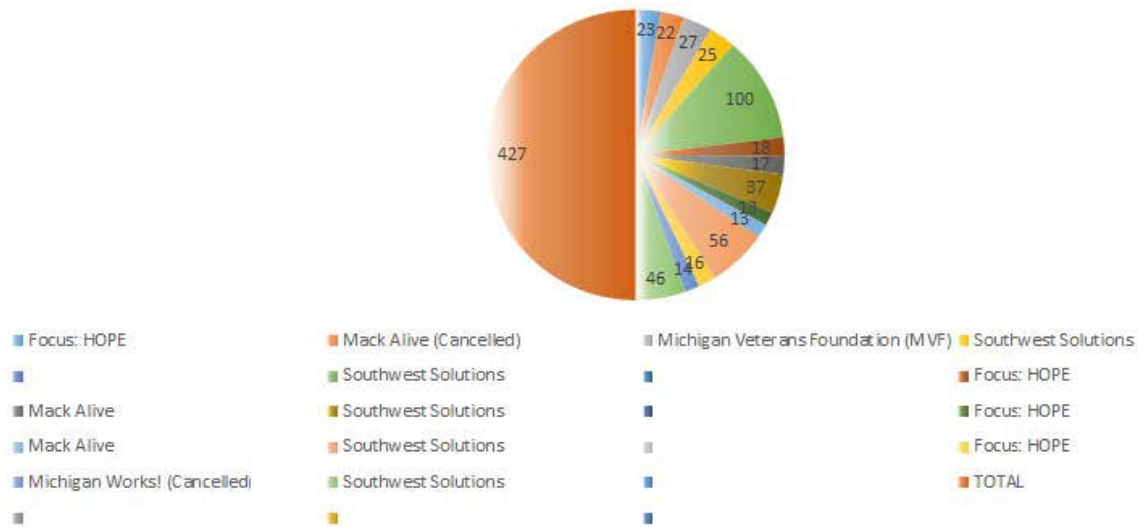


Figure 1: With the underlying goal of workforce development, the program provides adult basic education to help members of the Detroit community reach their academic goals and make steps toward greater self-sufficiency.

National Research

According to [research compiled by ProLiteracy](#), the children of parents with low literacy have a 72 percent chance of also scoring at the lowest reading levels. If an adult is at the lowest literacy level, we find that 43 percent live in poverty; an individual has a higher rate of unemployment and lower wages if that individual scores at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels; and, lastly, returning citizens who are provided an education are 43 percent less likely to return to prison. These facts have serious implications for Detroit as research by the National Institute for Literacy found that approximately 47% of Detroit residents (more than 200,000 individuals) lack basic literacy skills.

Harris Literacy Program

The Office of Adult Literacy was established in 2012 at Wayne State University (WSU) to galvanize efforts to make a substantial impact on the startlingly low literacy levels in Detroit. [The Harris Literacy Program](#) was launched in 2013 as a turn-key educational enhancement program for adults whose literacy levels are equivalent to the fourth- to eighth-grade range. With the underlying goal of workforce development, the program provides adult basic education to help members of the Detroit community reach their academic goals and make steps toward greater self-sufficiency. The Harris Literacy Program strives to leave the greatest possible imprint on adult

literacy while helping Detroit residents make educational inroads to self-sufficiency. Using university research to identify and apply best-practices, the program seeks to provide an exemplary adult literacy learning experience.

What We Do

One of the bedrock principals of the program is collaboration, both with other adult literacy professionals and with community partners and stakeholders. The program has recently increased its presence in the Detroit adult education literacy arena, and intensified efforts around communication, referral and collaboration among the Detroit-area literacy partners, with the goal to provide the best possible outcomes for learners. The increase in collaboration and pathway-building has enhanced the support of adult students in reaching their educational goals. The educational landscape and opportunities in Detroit are ever-evolving, and the program is continually exploring opportunities for high-impact partnerships in its mission to reach as many students as possible and drive down the staggering literacy rates in our neighborhoods.

Community Partners

A key aspect of the program is that it is not bound by brick and mortar and is able to go directly to where the need is most present. The program partners with numerous community organizations, including several workforce development programs, ensuring that literacy training is a core aspect of their efforts. These partners include Focus: HOPE, Southwest Economic Solutions (SWES), Michigan Veterans Foundation, Mack Alive and Michigan Works: Highland Park. Focus: HOPE is a public foundation that started in response to the civil unrest of July 1967 and provides education and training for marginalized communities. SWES's mission is to increase economic success for individuals and families. The Michigan Veterans Foundation is a nonprofit agency that has established the Detroit Veterans Center and provides transitional housing and resources to homeless veterans. Mack Alive is an eastside neighborhood change agent that has worked to educate, connect and empower neighborhood residents for over 25 years. While enhancement of literacy, academic and employability skills are critical, the mission of Mack Alive is to foster upward mobility on Detroit's eastside. Michigan Works: Highland Park is part of a statewide unified workforce development system and delivers services and assistance to adults.

Methodology

The Harris Literacy Program utilizes curriculum developed specifically to help students master the key concepts needed to achieve improved scores in Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). It incorporates an application of real-world scenarios and builds upon the wealth of a lifetime of information that is brought to the adult education classroom. Most students have varying levels of proficiency in math and reading, but all are scoring below 9th grade equivalency. In addition, many have found that the traditional classroom setting was not well suited to their learning styles. For these reasons, we maintain small classroom sizes and two professionals work with the students.

Our lesson plans incorporate emotional intelligence principles that help build community within the classroom and address soft skills that may need development.

Creating a Dialogue and Sharing What We Know

Collaboration and sharing of information are the hallmarks of the annual Practice-Based Updates for Literacy Strategies and Education (P.U.L.S.E) conference. Going on its fifth year, this is an interactive forum for practitioners and administrators in the field of adult education and literacy. In partnership with Reading Works (an umbrella organization for adult literacy programs), the Harris Literacy Program created this holistic adult literacy professional development opportunity to provide practitioners and administrators research based best practices in the field of adult literacy.

Our 2018 Impact

In 2018, we provided services to 161 English language arts and 149 math students (see distribution in Figure 1), and we realized the following individual student successes: 26 students enrolled in GED classes; 17 students passed at least one level of the GED; 5 students completed their GED; 6 students entered training/workforce development; 4 students enrolled in community college or a university; 8 students obtained a job; 1 student had a job promotion; and 1 student experienced a pay increase at their job.

One of the pillars to student retention and success lies in the strength of our instructors. We work closely with our instructional staff and provide them with the vast benefit of talent from our own Wayne State community. This helps shape best practices in the classroom and improves the overall experience for our students.

The Harris Literacy Center has served more than 1,700 Detroiters since 2013. With each new student served, we are making foundational changes for individuals and families in this community, preparing them to succeed in the workplace and in numerous other facets of their lives.

ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to: expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP UNIVERSITIES PROGRAM

APLU and its **Commission on Economic and Community Engagement (CECE)** established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Universities Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP designation program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP awards program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- **Talent** and workforce development
- **Innovation**, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- **Place** development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP