



# The Pathway to Your Future



Kern Adult Education Consortium helps people pursue well-paid careers, higher education and brighter possibilities.

► INSIDE: Find out how **YOU** can get started!



A Special Advertising Supplement



# Need a Better Job?

Adult education can get you the skills needed for a well-paying job in the Kern County area

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT



In today's economy, the pathway to a well-paying job requires an education beyond high school and a willingness to gain new skills.

Giving local residents the skills to be job-ready is the goal of the Kern Adult Education Consortium, a partnership of education providers dedicated to expanding and improving educational opportunities for adult learners.

To accomplish its goal, the consortium brings together community colleges and school districts to collaborate on services that include GED and high school diploma preparation, English as a second language classes, career counseling and job training for in-demand trades.

"Our goal is for every person to earn a living wage," says John Means, chairman of the **Kern Adult Education Consortium** and vice chancellor of educational services for the Kern Community College District. To do that, the consortium must help underemployed citizens go beyond a high school diploma and complete at least one year of college.

Support for adult education here and around the state comes from the California Adult Education Program. Means says these funds come as the Kern County region grapples with poverty and high rates of unemployment among 16- to 24-year-olds.

"The funds have allowed for adult education classes where there were none before," says Means. "We'll significantly increase the number of adults who have at least a one-year college certificate and can earn a living wage. We define that as at least \$19 an hour."

Means says that with the state's funding, the region's adult schools and community colleges can collaborate to offer students more educational programs and services tailored to the needs of their particular community.

For example, Mojave can be described as "a community of extremes; rich in jobs but needing qualified

workers," according to Susan Clipperton, director of the **Mojave Adult Program**. Creative collaborations, like Mojave Adult Program students studying careers in allied health through **Cerro Coso Community College**, are helping more students get the training they need for employment. To the south in Bakersfield, Mark Wyatt, principal director of the **Bakersfield Adult School**, says workers are needed in sectors such as agriculture, oil, health care and information technology. He says the adult school's partnership with the county and America's Job

Center of California helped establish The Job Spot, an educational and employment resource center and a culinary arts program called Café 1600.

Toward the west, Staci Phipps, director of the **Porterville Adult School**, says certified nursing and medical assistants are in high demand in her community. Because of its partnership with **Porterville**

**College**, the school has expanded its ESL program and students can earn a certificate in phlebotomy.

In the north, Martin Lonza is principal of the **Wasco Adult School**. He says sectors such as distribution, construction and health care are in need of educated workers.

"Our school has concentrated on the basics," says Lonza. "So, we offer continuing education to earn a high school diploma. That's our primary goal, but we want to go beyond that, so we're also beginning to offer GED services for a high school equivalency certificate. We're also looking at what kinds of vocational training we can bring on and starting to partner with the Consortium to expand those offerings."

Lonza says the school will seek partnerships with community colleges to expand its offerings.

*Keep reading for stories on how students are overcoming barriers and finding out that a better career is possible with adult education.*



## MEET THE CONSORTIUM

Thanks to California's Adult Education Program funding, adult schools and community colleges in the Kern County area are working together to create programs that meet workforce needs. This work is being facilitated by the Kern Adult Education Consortium, which is comprised of these local entities:



Mono County Office of Education  
Stacey Adler, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



# The Ingredients for Success

Juan knew he had to learn English to be a more successful business owner

BY MACKENZIE MENDEZ

In 1989, Juan Rodriguez moved from San Luis Potosí, Mexico, to Porterville to fulfill his dream of owning a bakery.

In 1995 he opened Panaderia La Cabaña and his dream became a reality. Rodriguez says the large Latino community in Porterville provided an ideal market for the kind of bakery he wanted to run, a place where Spanish-speaking residents could purchase freshly baked Mexican breads without having to translate their order.

While conducting business in Spanish was one of the bakery's greatest strengths, Rodriguez soon found that it also presented a unique set of challenges. He was unable to communicate with the English-speaking customers and vendors his business depended on.

As the bakery grew, Rodriguez realized he would need to learn English to keep his dream alive.

In 1996, Rodriguez began evening ESL classes at Porterville Adult School. The basic skills he learned during his first few semesters helped him interact with more of his customers, and this kept him motivated to continue learning. He spent the next two years attending intermediate classes with Mr. Arreola.

"He was a not only a good teacher but also a good friend who advised me to continue studying to successfully run my business," says Rodriguez.

Soon, Rodriguez was using English to communicate with people in the bakery and outside of it.

His language skills gave him the confidence to take on another challenge, and in 2002 he relocated his bakery to a newly constructed building — all while attending advanced ESL classes in the evenings.

On one of these evenings, Rodriguez met Mr. Uribe. Mr. Uribe taught an ESL/citizenship class and encouraged Rodriguez to join. Rodriguez declined the offer initially,

worrying that he didn't have the skills to apply for American citizenship, but Mr. Uribe was persistent. He continued to ask Rodriguez to join his class throughout the school year, and eventually Rodriguez agreed. He enrolled

in 2005, and a year and a half later he became a U.S. citizen.

Porterville Adult School gave Rodriguez the skills he needed to support his dream, but more importantly, it gave him the confidence to dream bigger. Now the proud owner of two bakeries and an American citizen, Rodriguez encourages others to enroll in adult education right away.

Says Rodriguez, "I hope my testimon[y] encourages others to seek the same or better opportunities that I had."

"I am grateful for all the things I was able to learn at Porterville Adult School."

Juan Rodriguez  
Owner and Baker of Panaderia  
La Cabaña



Juan Rodriguez credits learning English with making him a more successful bakery owner.  
PHOTO BY JUAN TOBIAS JR.



## YOU CAN EARN MORE!

Here are just some of the career fields you can enter with adult education, including average number of annual job openings, training required and wages:

Occupation	Annual Job Openings	Training Required	Median Hourly Wages
Electrical Power-Line Installer and Repairer	95	Apprenticeship	\$47.15
Plumber, Pipefitter, Steamfitter	482	Apprenticeship	\$22.08
Operating Engineer and Other Construction Equipment Operator	438	Apprenticeship	\$25.38
Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic, Installer	394	1 Semester (4 months)	\$20.89
Welder, Cutter, Solderer, Brazier	512	1 Semester (4 months)	\$20.46
Registered Nurse	2,195	4 Semesters (2 years)	\$44.79
Licensed Practical Nurse/Licensed Vocational Nurse	614	3 Semesters (12 months)	\$24.85
Pharmacy Technician	349	4 Semesters (2 years)	\$17.67
Medical Records, Health Information Technician	150	1 Semester (4 months)	\$18.88
Health Technologist	190	4 Semesters (2 years)	\$20.99

# Take the First Step to Success

BY AMANDA CARAWAY



## ► WHERE TO START

Through the Kern Adult Education Consortium, adult schools and community colleges in Kern County are working together to expand access to adult education and develop programs that align with workforce needs. The consortium works closely with the local Workforce Development Board to determine what certification and training programs it should offer to help students obtain lucrative employment upon graduation.



## ► ADULT SCHOOLS

Students can earn a **high school diploma** or prepare for **GED/HiSet exams** at local adult schools, with no out-of-pocket expense. Committed educators help guide students through the programs, which also include **ESL** and **citizenship**.



## ► COMMUNITY COLLEGES

With assistance from the consortium, students have access to affordable **associate degree** and **certificate programs** in areas that have a strong workforce demand.



## SUCCESS

Completing a program at an adult school or community college can lead to advanced career opportunities and the ability to pursue continued education.

### OPPORTUNITIES MAY INCLUDE:

Health Care  
Construction  
Agriculture

Manufacturing  
Information Technology  
College

“We are focused on identifying the industries with the most job opportunities so that we can create programs to help our students earn a living wage.”

Thatcher Weldon,  
Director of Adult Education for  
Kern Adult Education Consortium





# It's Never Too Late to Finish High School

Missing a lot of credits? Start here!



Margaret Martinez used adult school classes to earn her GED and is now enrolled in college.  
PHOTO BY JUAN TOBIAS JR.

## A GED is the first step on woman's career path

BY RODNEY OROSCO

**M**argaret Martinez wasn't going to let anything stop her from getting her GED. Not even math.

Going back to school as a 38-year-old, single mother of four was difficult.

"It was hard raising kids and going to school, but I was going to make them proud," she says.

Martinez dropped out of school in seventh grade. Over the years, she said she was too busy raising her two boys and twin girls to think about going back to school. But all that changed as her children grew and needed the young mom less and less.

"When my kids were older, a light went off — I wanted a career," she says, "And, I knew I would need to finish school to get that career."

She saw an advertisement at church for adult school and the next day she enrolled at Bakersfield Adult School.

Martinez took classes that prepared her to take the GED test, which is the best way to complete high school for students who are missing many credits. She breezed through the social science and the English lessons. The science and math lessons, however, proved to be a challenge.

"I failed that math [practice] test three times," she says. "It was so hard, but I was not going to give up. My future was riding on it."

After three years, Martinez's hard work in adult school paid off: In May 2018, she passed her exam and received her GED.

Thanks to her determination, her future is now clear. Martinez is currently enrolled in a medical assistant course and plans on going to phlebotomy school to learn how to draw blood.

Martinez points out how supportive her kids are of their student-mom.

"It is funny, my daughters are just finishing high school, they are both 4.0 students and they tell me how much they admire me," she laughs. "I admire them!"

**"It was hard raising kids and going to school, but I was going to make them proud."**

Margaret Martinez  
College student

Only missing a few? Read this!



Without a high school diploma, Jeff Thorsnes struggled to get even an entry level job, even though he had years of experience.  
PHOTO BY JUAN TOBIAS JR.

## Man earns high school diploma at age 65

BY AMANDA CARAWAY

**J**eff Thorsnes graduated with his high school diploma through the Tehachapi Adult School — it just took him a little bit longer than most people. Thorsnes obtained his degree at the age of 65.

"I had grandkids who were preparing to graduate from high school and go onto college," says Thorsnes. "I began to have nightmares that I would die before I got my degree."

Although he had attempted to get his diploma many times in the past, the support he received from the Tehachapi Adult School is what finally enabled him to succeed. The admissions counselors helped him go through all of his transcripts to find out what credits he needed. Typically, students who are only missing a few credits are advised that completing those classes is the easiest way to finish high school. It turns out, Thorsnes was missing a lot of credits — 45 to be exact. Nevertheless, he decided to complete them all to earn his diploma.

For close to two years, Thorsnes took online classes and went on campus once or twice per week to receive guidance from his teachers.

**"Now I feel like I can do anything."**

Jeff Thorsnes  
Tehachapi Adult School Graduate

"It's very emotional for me to think about the sense of accomplishment I have," says Thorsnes. "Before I felt like a fraud. Now I feel like I can do anything."

Despite not having a degree, Thorsnes had enjoyed a solid career in construction, working for big companies. Before online applications, it was easier to skate over the education portion. Now, applicants can't even apply if they don't meet the education requirements.

"I had a lot of fear, because I was pigeonholed by a situation of my own making," says Thorsnes. "Suddenly, I couldn't even get an entry level job ... after years of working as a manager."

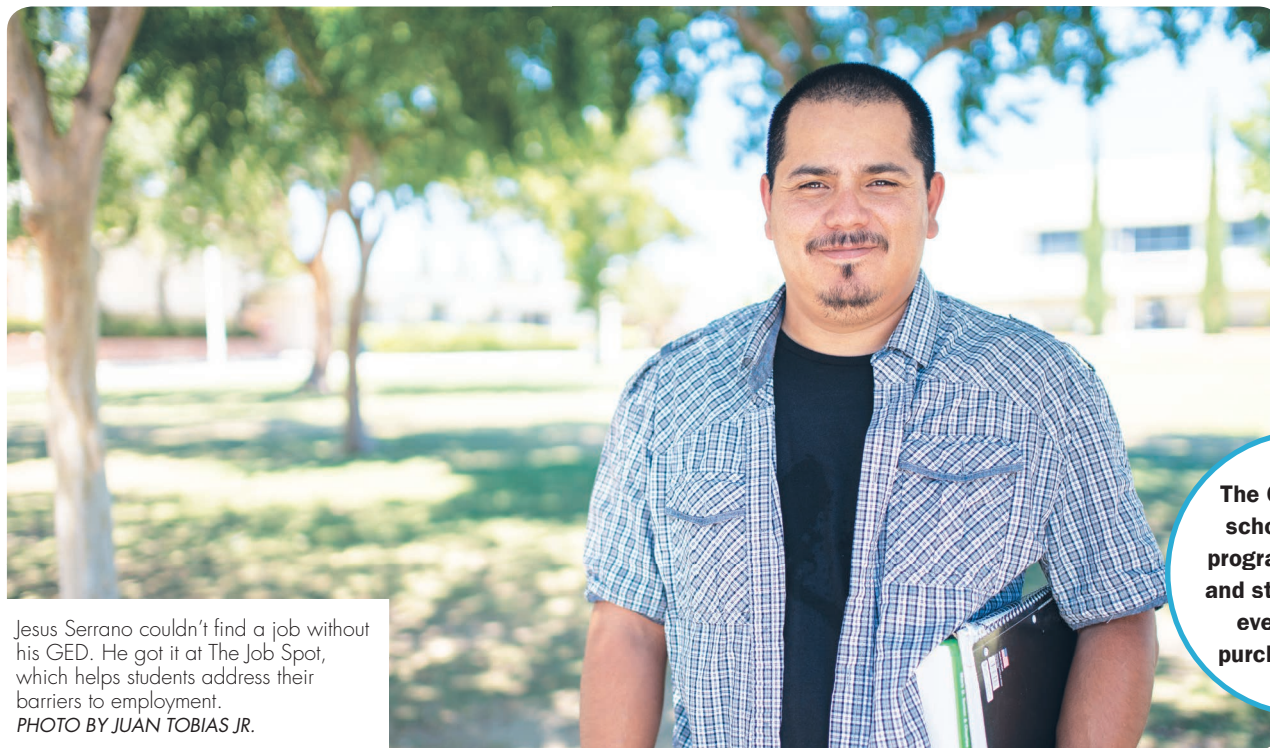
Now, many doors are open to Thorsnes that were closed before. For example, he plays the fiddle and for the first time he can apply to study music at a college.

"I feel a great sense of gratitude for the teachers at the adult school," he says. "They made it easy for me to get my diploma."

# The Spot for Success



AT A BARGAIN PRICE



Jesus Serrano couldn't find a job without his GED. He got it at The Job Spot, which helps students address their barriers to employment.  
PHOTO BY JUAN TOBIAS JR.

**The GED or high school diploma programs are free, and students don't even need to purchase books.**

## Jesus needed his GED to get a job, but his experience at The Job Spot inspired him to aim higher.

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

**A**fter nearly a decade delivering newspapers part time, Jesus Serrano says he dreamed of landing a better-paying, full-time position with benefits.

He applied for several jobs. Employers, however, rejected him because he lacked a high school degree.

"Most of the jobs ask you for the high school diploma or a GED," Serrano says.

Last year, he went the Bakersfield Adult School to enroll and study for a GED. That is when a school adviser told him he could study closer to his home at the school's new workforce development center, The Job Spot.

Established in 2017, The Job Spot operates through a partnership between Bakersfield Adult School, Bakersfield College and America's Job Center of California.

"The Job Spot was designed as a multifaceted agency to better serve students who have employment barriers, who are facing multiple levels of poverty and other resource barriers," says Endee Grijalva, program manager for adult education at Bakersfield College. "Our goal is to get them into a career field or a guided pathway to a career."

Mark Wyatt, the Bakersfield Adult School's principal director, calls The Job Spot an "all-in-one" facility where adult

learners can obtain remediation, study for their high school diploma or GED, learn English as a second language and obtain job training in areas such as nursing, medical billing and information technology. Students can also get help finding a job or transferring to college.

**"It made me believe in myself again."**

Jesus Serrano  
Former student at The Job Spot

"We've had 40 students to transfer to Bakersfield College for full-time community college work," he says. Additionally, several students have passed their GED exams, "a first step toward employment."

Moreover, The Job Spot has hosted several job fairs, Wyatt says.

"I'm an immigrant," says Serrano, "so English is my second language and I'm still learning. But I was able to improve my writing skills while attending the classes."

Serrano passed his GED in March 2018, however, he says his teachers encouraged him to set his sights higher. He is currently a student at Bakersfield College and plans to become an ultrasound technician, he says.

"It made me believe in myself again and showed me that if other people can do it, then I can do it, too."

The Kern Adult Education Consortium adult schools offer programs to help residents get the education they need to pursue careers of their choice and start earning more. Best of all, thanks to the California's Adult Education Program funds and the generosity of the community, students can participate in these programs at a bargain price.

"Students can get a top-of-the-line education that is affordable," says Mark Wyatt, principal director of the Bakersfield Adult School.

Although some programs require fees, most are free. All of the required reading materials are available online or in the classroom. Students at the adult schools also get more individualized attention than at community colleges and other institutions, which means students have more support to get where they want to go.

"At the adult schools, we have committed educators who have a personalized approach to helping each student," Wyatt says.

Steve Bsharah, principal of the education center at Tehachapi Adult School agrees. "All of our teachers care deeply and our students know it. A lot of older students have anxiety about returning to school. We help put them at ease."

Wyatt finds that students at the adult school are uniquely motivated to reach their goals and get an education because they know it will have a positive impact on their lives.

"We have students from all walks of life," says Wyatt. "Every one of our 12,000 students has a unique and powerful story."

"If it wasn't for the adult school, I often wonder where these students would go to get the help that they need," says Bsharah. "With an education, these students can give back to the community and become hard-working, taxpaying citizens."

If students need more help on their career path, they can always return to adult schools to gain more skills that will help them advance or find a new job.



# Work Opportunities

Students share their paths to career education and new goals

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

The Kern Adult Education Consortium gives underemployed individuals the opportunity to earn a college and technical education (CTE) certificate for skills that can lead to a better-paying job or even higher education. CTE certifications are available for occupations in manufacturing, allied health care, business, agriculture, construction, information technology and more. Here's two stories of how adult education helped put local people back to work.

## Humberto and Nuri's story

For California City resident Humberto Balderrama, the chance to earn a CTE

certificate came after years working as a self-employed cabinetmaker.

More than two years ago, his teenage son, Nuri, told his father that the school he took welding classes at — Mojave Junior Senior High School — also offered welding classes at night. “He told me it was a great opportunity,” Balderrama says.

The idea of learning a new trade intrigued him, Balderrama says. So he enrolled in the program and took classes from 5-9 p.m. on Wednesday nights.

At first, he thought welding would be an easy skill to learn, he says.

**“This has definitely changed my life.”**

Humberto Balderrama  
Adult School welding student (pictured with son  
and fellow welding student, Nuri Balderrama)

“It was a big surprise learning that it’s so technical,” says Balderrama. “It’s a lot of safety issues which we didn’t think about until we learned the process, and it’s a lot of chemistry involved.”

Though challenging, he says he enjoyed getting instruction from expert teachers. He recently earned his certification and plans to seek advanced welding classes soon, he says.

Meanwhile, his son says welding inspired him to continue his education. Nuri says he plans to attend a technical college someday and earn a bachelor’s degree.

“I want to be a mechanical or electronics engineer,” he says. “I want to create pieces for machines. It gives me a good feeling knowing that I have something to give to the world.”

Meanwhile, Balderrama says he wants to put his welding skills to work by pursuing a career in construction, working on Los Angeles high-rises.

“This has definitely changed my life,” the older Balderrama says.

## Ruth's story

When Ruth Yesenia Barrientos-Pineda married and moved from her home in El Salvador to Delano in 2008, she says not being able to speak or understand English made life difficult as she tried to adjust to her new environment.

A doctor in her native county, Barrientos-Pineda knew she needed to learn English for a chance at a new career in her new country.

Then, some friends told her about the Delano Adult School near her home and how it had an English as a second language (ESL) program.

Barrientos-Pineda says she began taking ESL classes at the Delano Adult School that same year. She recalls attending every morning, five days a week. After putting her studies on hold for awhile, she completed her ESL certificate in 2016.

Inspired, she says she set a new goal for herself: to pursue her high school equivalency degree or GED.

“I know that obtaining my GED is the first step to a career or a better job,” she says,

She credits her teachers at the Delano Adult School for motivating her on those days when she felt discouraged.

She graduated from the Delano Adult School with her GED that year, and decided to continue her education by taking more classes at Delano to learn to use software programs like Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel.

Recently, she began taking classes at Bakersfield College. She has already completed a political science class and a course in communications, she says.

Barrientos-Pineda says she may want to practice medicine again one day. But for now, she wants to explore all of her options.

“I want get a good job in the future,” she says. “But my goal is to be a better person and be in service to others. I want to continue going to Bakersfield College because it will be a door to getting a better job.”

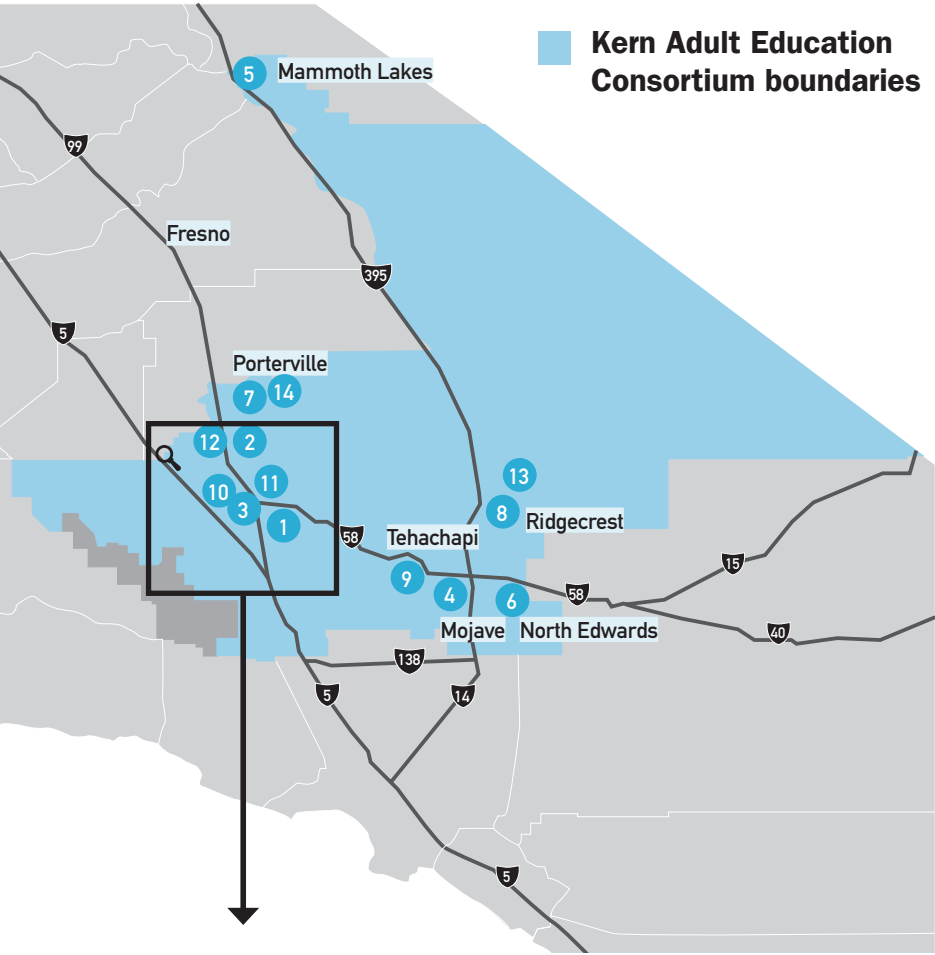


**“My goal is to be a better person and be in service to others.”**

Ruth Yesenia Barrientos-Pineda  
Adult School student

# Get Where You Want to Go With Adult Education

Contact your local school today for enrollment information



CTE = Career and Technical Education  
GED = General Equivalency Diploma

ESL = English as a Second Language  
HSD = High School Diploma

School	HSD	GED	ESL	Citizenship	CTE
<b>1 Bakersfield Adult School</b> 501 S. Mt. Vernon Ave., Bakersfield 661-835-1855 bas.kernhigh.org <b>Health Careers</b> 2727 F St., Bakersfield 661-861-1151 basmedical.org	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>2 Delano Adult School</b> 1811 Princeton St., Delano 661-720-4171 djuhds.org/Domain/12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>3 McFarland USD</b> 599 5th St., McFarland 661-792-3178 mcfarlandusd.com	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>4 Mojave USD</b> 15732 O St., Mojave 661-824-4088 ext. 108 mojave.k12.ca.us	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>5 Mono County Office of Education Adult Education Center</b> 400 Sierra Park Road, Mammoth Lakes 760-914-4131 monocoe.org	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>6 Muroc Joint USD</b> 17100 Foothill Ave., North Edwards 760-762-5121 muroc.k12.ca.us	✓				✓
<b>7 Porterville USD</b> 1414 W. Olive Ave., Porterville 559-782-7030 adultschool.portervilleschools.org	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>8 Sierra Sands</b> 348 Rowe St., Ridgecrest 760-499-1722 ssusd.org	✓		✓		
<b>9 Tehachapi Adult School</b> 400 S. Snyder Ave., Tehachapi 661-822-2112 teh.k12.ca.us	✓	✓			✓
<b>10 Wasco Union High School District</b> 1445 Poso Drive, Wasco 661-758-7450 ihs.wascouhsd.org	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>11 Bakersfield College</b> 1801 Panorama Drive, Bakersfield 661-395-4011 bakersfieldcollege.edu			✓		✓
<b>12 Bakersfield College - Delano Campus</b> 1450 Timmons Ave., Delano 661-720-2024 bakersfieldcollege.edu/adult-education			✓		✓
<b>13 Cerro Coso Community College</b> 3000 College Heights Blvd., Ridgecrest 760-384-6100 cerrocoso.edu		✓			✓
<b>14 Porterville College</b> 100 E. College Ave., Porterville 559-791-2235 portervillecollege.edu			✓		✓