



**Berks County
Workforce Development Board**

**BERKS COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
BOARD PLANNING COMMITTEE**

*Ad Hoc Taskforce Report on Adult English Language
Proficiency and Numeracy*

JUNE 9, 2022

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SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As detailed in the Berks County Workforce Development Board's (WDB) recently adopted 4-year plan, local employers seeking to recover from the current pandemic are facing unprecedented near-term workforce challenges. These include: "new hire churn", low employee retention (i.e., high turnover), and less than effective recruiting results despite significant compensation increases. These conditions exacerbate employers' damaging loss of organizational knowledge from the growing number of retirements among an aging workforce and increasing voluntary resignations prompted by a variety of personal and family decisions.

The Berks County WDB has identified and documented significant gaps in English language (EL) proficiency and adult numeracy among incumbent workers and jobseekers as local economic development needs. Failure to address these basic education deficits among a significant portion of our adult workforce undermines our ability to expand and improve the workplace in response. These economic and workforce development challenges have been amplified in recent decades by a lack of sustained employer commitment to employee training and development that is needed to meet long-term business growth.

To better understand these challenges and opportunities, on September 17, 2021, the WDB approved the creation of a local *Ad Hoc Taskforce on Adult English Language Proficiency and Numeracy*. Under the auspices of the WDB's Planning Committee, this Taskforce undertook a dialogue through April 2022 with adult members of the community, workforce training providers, and employers to better understand the root causes of this complex challenge. Feedback was systematically gathered from structured listening sessions with employers and community members. This feedback as well as employment trend data were then reviewed and discussed by members of the Taskforce leading to the following summary findings:

- While adult numeracy will remain a challenge over the medium to long term, a lack of English Language proficiency is holding back many willing workers from contributing to local employers right now. The majority of community members interviewed were employed, but not in the jobs they most desired nor in ones that they felt led to career paths with sufficient advancement potential. The primary cause for their inability to find better employment was their lack of English language proficiency despite a willingness to learn English as a second language.
- There has been insufficient focus on the impact and consequences of the lack of English language proficiency among a significant segment of the local community resulting in inadequate program capacity to address these problems. From a public policy and priorities perspective – relatively low/flat state and federal funding for Adult Basic Education (ABE) is insufficient to address our clear need to upskill our emerging workforce to replace retiring workers and others who have departed the local labor force.
- Changing this situation will require shifts in public policy priorities that result in more funding as well as new models that involve private employers' making their own investments in training as well as human resources' recruitment and incumbent worker retention tactics.

- There simply are not enough training options to serve all who need and desire to become English language proficient in an employment setting. Improving this situation will require:
 1. *Acknowledging that adult basic education, with a focus in our region on English proficiency, should be considered a priority social determinant of health and well-being for individuals and their families.*
 2. *Fostering collaborative approaches among providers and employers to enhance English language acquisition in the county.*
 3. *Increasing the number of English language skills training programs within low to moderate income community areas in the city of Reading, plus a growing need for such programs outside the city.*
 4. *Establishing bridge programs that connect non-native English speakers to workforce training opportunities.*

The WDB will support initiatives by forward-thinking employers and multi-employer partnerships to sponsor and fund adult English language and numeracy programs for incumbent workers at the workplace.

SECTION II. BERKS COUNTY AT A GLANCE

A. Changing Demographics

As stated in our Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) 2021-2024 WIOA Multi-Year Local Area Plan:

“Berks County historically has been characterized by a substantial local population of available working age adults well-matched to the region’s skilled talent needs for good paying middle-skill jobs in healthcare, construction and manufacturing. Most of this experienced workforce combined at least a high school diploma with significant knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through decades on the job with local employers....However, these same good jobs (and pre-requisite education) are often not readily accessible to our many Berks County residents with limited English language speaking ability. The American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate (2015-2019) identifies 29,738 Berks County residents (7.6%) who “speak English less than very well”. This represents a notable 75% increase from the 17,000 residents identified in our previous 4-year local plan (2017-2021). Our 7.6% rate for residents with this challenge is the third highest rate among Pennsylvania’s 67 counties and much higher than the statewide rate (4.3%).”

Additionally, “Local school districts, the Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU), housing program administrators and community-based organizations consistently report to the WDB that a majority of our newly arriving families (often with school age children) are moving here over the past decade from the greater New York City/Northern New Jersey region which is only 120 miles distant. Like many immigrant families before them, these families come to Berks County in search of more affordable housing, safer schools, and better job prospects.”

The Berks County WDB understands that the need to improve dramatically adult basic education is now mission-critical for too many of our jobseekers and employers. Meeting this challenge will require a broad county-wide effort through a problem-solving public dialogue with, and among, this marginalized populace, our local employers, education partners, elected officials, community-based organizations, and other social advocates in the near to long-term.

B. Labor Market “Churn”

Continuing a worrisome trend that preceded the pandemic, Berks County Workforce unfortunately continues to lead all local labor markets in the Commonwealth in “*new hire churn.*” New hire churn can be understood as the percentage of the workforce at an establishment that is made up of replacement new hires separate from any new hires resulting from actual workforce growth at the establishment.

- The latest available data from the PA Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) for the period September-December 2021, shows that *Berks County employers onboarded 13,063 new hires during these three months constituting an astonishing 8% of all local employees*, down from quarters two and three in 2021, but still the highest of any area in the Commonwealth.
- Increasingly, *local employers* must focus their attention on employee retention as well as recruitment.
- Our employers may also need to support (even sponsor) efforts to build skills in *English-Language Learning* into their long-term talent attraction, retention, and workforce development strategies.

SECTION III. METHODOLOGY

The Taskforce’s working hypothesis was as follows: While adult numeracy remains a challenge, the lack of English Language proficiency is holding back a significant number of potentially willing workers from contributing to local employers right now. From a public policy and priorities perspective, relatively low/flat state and federal funding for Adult Basic Education (ABE) is insufficient to address local needs to upskill our emerging workforce to replace retiring workers and others who have departed the labor force.

The Taskforce consisted of a diverse group of educators, workforce specialists and employers committed to a 6-month exploration of these issues. Members of the Taskforce are listed in Appendix A.

While WDB staff provided data on regional labor market conditions, the Taskforce developed a two-pronged community outreach approach to hear directly from both employers and community members.

A. Employers’ Listening Sessions

Structured listening sessions via Microsoft Teams were held with representatives from the following employment sectors: manufacturing and construction/utilities; healthcare and social assistance;

and hospitality (accommodations and restaurants). These groupings were selected based on each sector's importance to our local economy as well as their specific – and different from each other – workforce challenges. For consistency among these employer sessions the moderator, Dan Fogarty, Taskforce Co-Chair, used the prompts/questions listed below for each group. The list of employers' responses in each of the sessions can be found in Appendix B.

1. Throughout 2021 have you had increased trouble recruiting or retaining entry level employees at your company?
2. Over the past year have you relaxed employment standards for new hires? If so, how?
3. Is the overall level of applied math skills among your new hires acceptable to support future company growth?*
4. Is the overall of applied math skills among your incumbent workforce acceptable to support future company growth?*
5. If not, what strategies have you deployed or plan to deploy to address the shortfall in applied math skills among new hires and incumbent workers?*
6. Is the overall level of English language skills among your new hires acceptable to support future company growth?
7. Is the overall level of English language skills among your incumbent workforce acceptable to support future company growth?
8. If not, what strategies have you deployed or plan to deploy to address the shortfall in English language skills among new hires and incumbent workers?
9. Would you be willing to join with community partners to help your employees improve their applied math skills or their English language skills? If so, which is the greater priority at your company?

* *Question was omitted from the employer listening session 3 survey after it was realized that English language literacy had been identified overwhelmingly as the priority proficiency issue.*

Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities. A structured virtual listening session was held on December 15, 2021, with representatives from 14 different employers in these industries.

The critical “goods producing” sectors of manufacturing, construction and utilities offer well-paying career paths yet are struggling to replace experienced workers who are retiring in large numbers. Unfortunately, most local employers in these sectors have under-invested in recruiting and training replacement workers for these retiring baby-boomers and the pandemic has exacerbated this situation. Employers are seeking to diversify their workforces, but the available applicant pool too often lacks the necessary skills and preparation to join these attractive career paths. Many (if not most) employers in these closely related sectors likely have the financial resources to fund adult education and training with little or no public assistance.

Healthcare and Social Assistance – A structured virtual listening session was held on January 12, 2022, with representatives from 11 different employers in this sector.

The overall physical, mental, and emotional health of most segments of our local population (young and old; rich and poor; those served and those who serve, etc.) has suffered both directly and indirectly from the pandemic. However, those who serve the rest of us in our healthcare and social assistance organizations have borne the burden of this impact in untold ways which have

disrupted careers and led to acute labor shortages. Employers in our large (and historically steadily growing) healthcare and social assistance sector(s) face uniquely acute workforce challenges as they struggle to respond. Given their revenue constraints, employers in these two sectors likely lack the financial resources to fund adult education and training without some public or private foundation funding or cost-sharing.

Hospitality Sectors (Accommodations and Restaurants) Engaging with local employers in our distressed hospitality sectors proved quite challenging. However, despite the scheduling and employer participation challenges encountered by the Taskforce, two structured virtual listening sessions were successfully conducted in February with representatives from six different employers in these sectors.

Front-line employees in these publicly facing industries also took the brunt of the pandemic. Given their relatively small size and tight profit margins, employers in these sectors may lack the financial resources to fund adult education and training without some public or private foundation funding or cost-sharing.

B. Community Members' Listening Sessions

Three different community listening sessions were held in person:

Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at Reading Area Community College's (RACC) Miller Center for the Arts, 10 South 2nd Street, Reading. Participants were students enrolled in English as a Second Language classes at RACC or the Literacy Council of Reading – Berks (LCRB). The co-facilitators were Auria Bradley, RACC's Director of Career Training, Community Education & Professional Development, and Ryan Breisch, Executive Director, LCRB. This session was held in English; however, a few comments were offered in Spanish which Ms. Bradley translated. Approximately 70 students participated. Also in attendance were representatives from this Taskforce and partner agencies as well as RACC and LCRB staff. However, only students' comments were solicited. Prompts from the co-facilitators dealt with attendees' work experiences and employment barriers they face due to lack of either oral or written English language skills. Note takers captured participant comments. Students were asked to fill in a brief paper questionnaire on these same prompts, and those comments were incorporated into the summary of that session (Appendix C). As this session took place from 11:30am – 12:30pm a take-away box lunch was available for students, courtesy of LCRB.

Saturday, April 2nd at the Berks Latino Workforce Development Corporation, (BLWDC) Tec Centro, 450 South 6th Street, Reading. This afternoon session was conducted in Spanish and was part of a general Tec Centro open house for families complete with food and games for children. This approach was intentional, designed to attract participants to the listening session plus showcase Tec Centro as a community resource center focusing on educational/workforce programs and advising. Centro Hispano Daniel Torres assisted BLWDC with promoting this event to the local community. Also in attendance were representatives from this Taskforce. Darleen Garcia, BLWDC Executive Director, facilitated this listening session. Approximately fifty attendees participated, contributing first-hand commentary on their personal experiences. As in the first session, a short paper questionnaire was available, and those comments have been incorporated into the summary of this session found in Appendix D.

Sunday, April 24, 2022, following Sunday services at St Peter the Apostle Church, 322 South 5th Street, Reading. This session was organized by Angel Figueroa of I-LEAD and conducted in Spanish during a post-service coffee reception with twelve contributing attendees and nine community partners participating. Similar conversational prompts to those used at the other two sessions were used by well-known community leader Isamac Torres – Figueroa who facilitated this conversation. Taskforce co-chair, Dan Fogarty, attended this session along with Taskforce member Marcelino Colón, Jr. who assisted with translating participant responses from Spanish to English. Summary notes as in the other sessions were made on participants’ comments (see Appendix E).

SECTION IV. DISCOVERIES

A. Employer Feedback

i. General

Employers report that job applicant numbers overall are down. Interested applicants are especially scarce for positions with specific job-related experience requirements across sectors and for semi-skilled positions in the Hospitality / Accommodations sector.

This situation is made worse by an alarming lack of applicant and new hire follow-through (a complaint from employers in every listening session.) “Ghosting” was described as failure to show up for an initial or even a second scheduled interview, failure to report for the first day of work once a job offer had been accepted, or failure to return to work after starting a job. In most of these cases, there was no communication from the applicant or new hire leading to the phrase “ghosting”.

Human Resources professionals across industries report high levels of stress as they do their best to fill open positions in this difficult environment. For small companies or organizations without professional HR staff the frustrations are even more intense.

In each employer session, it was apparent that applied math skills were not top-of-mind for participants. Positions that require specific math skills include these skills in the job description and screening process. While employers would prefer to have a larger pool of qualified applicants, the lack of applied math skills overall was not expressed as a major concern. Lack of English language proficiency clearly was the more primary, although not exclusive, pressing employer issue cutting across the various employer sectors. Based on this feedback, the focus of the Taskforce shifted to English language challenges.

ii. More Specific

In certain sectors such as Manufacturing and Hospitality the working conditions or hours, while very different, are not considered attractive. This is leading employers in these sectors to review all aspects of compensation and the work environment.

Nearly all employer participants reported that they had raised or were working to raise wages. However, participants from some industry sectors such as non-profits and hospitality noted that they simply cannot compete on wages with other sectors. In some cases, employers reported improving other benefits such as Paid Time Off (PTO). Such policies are being made more flexible and are now spelled out upfront as recruitment enticements.

Several employers spoke about revamping their on-boarding procedures - making them more intentional and focused with the goal of better retention.

In construction and utilities, it is particularly difficult to find experienced candidates for mid-level skilled positions.

Hiring standards while reviewed, in most cases were not relaxed. The most common exception was for lower skilled positions. For positions with absolute skill requirements employers did not feel it would be either safe or productive to relax hiring standards.

Lack of English language proficiency leads to employees not understanding instructions, not being able to give direction to others, or an inability to understand safety materials. These concerns were consistently expressed by participants from Manufacturing as well as Construction / Utilities.

In Hospitality / Accommodations many back of the house jobs such as semi-skilled kitchen work and housekeeping positions may not require English language proficiency. However, higher paying jobs (including those where staff receive tips) require fluent English language interaction with customers. Restaurants in particular have had to curtail hours or refuse reservations particularly for special events due to a lack of staff.

Human Resource staff are increasingly called upon to deal with more than just traditional screening of applicant minimum qualifications. Job seekers' personal and family issues must be taken into consideration more than ever. Such issues as transportation, adequate / affordable housing, and reliable childcare impact employee availability for work. Some employers are attempting to find ways to assist incumbent employees address these issues with referral information and support as important retention tactics.

Employer interest in offering English language instruction was mixed. Not all employers have the resources to pay for such classes and fewer still are willing to provide on-site instruction. While acknowledging the need to support potentially good new hires, increasing English language fluency is still seen primarily as the individuals' responsibility. Employers may be more supportive of training for incumbent workers - including programs to increase English language proficiency for those who need it to advance in their organizations. Increasingly, employers may support opportunities for English speaking supervisors to learn workplace-specific conversational Spanish.

Across local industries, there is clearly a great and growing need for supervisors who are bilingual in English and Spanish

B. Community Feedback

i. Community Listening Session #1 - Presented by RACC and the LCRB, March 23, 2022, at the Miller Center for the Arts. Attended by ≈70 English as a Second Language students. As in all subsequent community listening session agendas, participants were asked to respond to these four questions:

- *If you were more proficient in English conversation, reading, and writing do you feel that you would have more job opportunities?*
- *How many of you would be interested in a career or job in manufacturing, healthcare, human services, and or education?*
- *Have you ever had a problem at work because you didn't have the right English and math skills for the assigned job? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation.*
- *Do you think that being fully able to read instructions at work even detailed ones in English will make a difference in workplace experience? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation.*

67 questionnaires with responses in English and 10 questionnaires with responses in Spanish were received with an unequivocal majority of the participants answering in the affirmative to each. Appendix C provides a breakdown of the cumulative responses as well as samples of participant reflection, many of which reinforce the daunting and personally intimidating impact that absent and/or limited English skills has on affected individuals looking to both acquire and retain gainful employment.

- ii. **Community Listening Session #2** – Organized by the Berks Latino Workforce Development Corporation (BLWDC) and conducted in Spanish on April 2, 2022, at Tec Centro, Reading, PA.

Berks Latino Workforce Development Corporation, Inc. (BLWDC) hosted a listening session on April 2, 2022. Centro Hispano Daniel Torres assisted with promoting the event to the community. Outcomes from this session suggests there is a strong association between English language skills gaps, unemployment, and underemployment. This dual-language session (English/Spanish) offered a family-oriented platform for members of the community and BLWDC active program participants to speak about their challenges in the workforce. Most attendees present spoke in Spanish. Bilingual questionnaires were distributed to attendees which surveyed the same questions featured across all three community-based listening sessions (see Appendix D).

Being English proficient was critical to the ability of Latinos not just to obtain employment but to keep employment. Attendees shared that communicating with co-workers and supervisors was typically their biggest barrier to performing their work. An attendee stated: “I had to resign because I couldn’t communicate with other people at jobs. It was difficult to perform the job without a clear understanding.” Others shared that they had the ability to do the work so long there was a staff member that could interpret between English and Spanish. Specifically, knowing the English language was critical to their capability to read and/or understand verbal instructions. When asked if being proficient in English would make a difference in their ability to read instructions, one participant answered: “Yes, because it's the language of this country. There are places that utilize the Spanish language, and this allows you to go about doing what you need in the comfort of your native language. But understanding English is what will mark the difference.”

Many participants shared their immigrant experience within the United States. While there were a few that started their journey in Berks County, the majority first lived in other regions. After their arrival to Berks County, they quickly “felt at home”, especially within the city of Reading. Despite not yet mastering the English language, they often found job opportunities for them in Berks, supportive services, and a sense of community. One participant who arrived here as a refugee took some time before enrolling in a course that would help improve English language proficiency. Despite originally avoiding learning the English language, the attendee is now actively enrolled in a program and finds it has been highly instrumental to on-the-job performance even within a short time. This attendee motivated other students to enroll in English language courses to succeed economically saying that “without a doubt, there would be a great array of employment opportunities and greater comprehension.” Another attendee said that: “It is important to read and write in English. It opens the doors to employment, and it is important because from there on, it is better for your future.”

Lastly, many of the participants aspired to enroll in a higher educational institution to obtain degrees in fields like nursing, education, and human services. Others expressed interest in completing shorter program tracks in allied health programs.

iii. Community Listening Session #3 – Presented by I-LEAD and conducted in Spanish, April 24, 2022, following Sunday services at St Peter the Apostle Church in Reading. Having the advantage of being a more intimate and familiar setting, Mr. Angel Figueroa welcomed the 12 contributors and informed them that this gathering was organized as a forum to listen, exchange, and gather knowledge of their personal language barrier concerns and work experiences. Mr. Figueroa assured all that they are safe to voice their concerns without repercussion.

Ms. Isamac Torres-Figueroa conducted the listening session asking reflections on the same four questions that were utilized in all three community events. Responses to each question were unanimously in the affirmative. All responses were verbal, captured in Spanish and translated for inclusion in this report as Appendix E. Abridged narrative from some more telling reflections expressed in this session are as follows:

- Even though a doctor in her native country, one attendee revealed that since she moved here, she has experienced great “difficulties” due to a lack of English language proficiency compounded by an inability to apply her expertise in the field she studied in her native country. She is currently working as an assistant director at a daycare. When asked how she got the job that she has now, her response was that it took 5 years because she had to get her degree validated, fill out an application which cost \$200, and have a family member submit a sealed transcript.
- A substantial number of the participants expressed concerns with not being able to access enrollment into ESL programs because of consistent filled seating capacity. One respondent stated that they have been waiting three years and another individual has been on the waitlist for two years.
- Another participant expressed his concern that he has only been here five months and applied to attend RACC’s ESL class, but it is full, and he was informed that he is wait-listed for six months. He noted that he is currently employed at Amazon but added that he needed assistance in completing the application. He has mastered the job but, without English language proficiency, he considers any upward mobility in employment unattainable.

C. Promising Practices

One employer in the Social Assistance sector is implementing cross training of part-time employees to enable them to move into full-time positions.

Another employer in this same sector is examining educational requirements and changing some from “required” to “preferred” where appropriate.

One employer in manufacturing is re-examining requirements for entry level semi-skilled positions to deal with the realities of the applicant pool.

A manufacturer mentioned the need for better cultural training for supervisors and has revamped

on-boarding procedures to be more appropriate for a diverse workforce.

For some, the interviewing process is becoming more flexible with employers attempting to better understand an applicant's interests and needs. In at least one case drug testing standards are more flexible as well.

Working with specific educational institutions like the County's two Career and Technology Centers (CTCs) to identify and recruit skilled new employees has been successful for one large construction industry employer. The company representative cautioned these cannot be just one time recruitment visits, they need to be ongoing relationships between the company and the educational institution.

There has also been success with structured job entry programs like those offered by Berks Connections / Pretrial Services (BCPS). Such programs can help participants learn the importance of so-called "soft skills" such as consistent and on-time attendance, how to accept supervision, and appropriate workplace behavior.

One manufacturing employer is beginning a new assessment for general cognitive ability which includes numerical reasoning but not a high level of mathematical skills. The test also looks at basic mechanical aptitude to see if additional training would be advisable to help the employee be successful. This is one example of an employer better understanding the qualities of and need for training of new hires.

Employers who want to increase diversity in their workplace are going to need to think strategically about making investments to attract and retain employees whose first language is not English. This may be a combination of translating basic operating procedural materials into Spanish as well as supporting individuals enrolling in classes to increase their English language proficiency. Such strategies can help an employer be seen by potential employees as offering an inclusive, open-minded, and forward-thinking work environment.

SECTION V. AD HOC TASKFORCE CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The WDB understands that this challenge will not solve itself. The work of the Taskforce over the past six months confirms that concerted action must be taken to dramatically improve levels of adult numeracy and English language proficiency to the benefit of jobseekers and employers alike. Following presentation of this report to the WDB's Planning Committee, one of the Committee members summarized the situation well stating "We need more! We need more English Language training and education for adults in all forms at all levels. We need more and more flexible programs in the workplace, we need more at Reading Area Community College, and we need more capacity among our terrific community partners."

A. Requisite Strategies

- Acknowledge adult basic education, focusing on English proficiency, as a priority social determinant of health and well-being.
- Foster collaborative approaches to enhance English language acquisition in the county.
- Increase the number of English language skills training programs within low to moderate income community areas in Reading, plus meet the growing need for such programs outside the city.
- Establish bridge programs that connect non-native English speakers to workforce training

opportunities.

B. Role of the Workforce Development Board (WDB) / Next Steps

The WDB is uniquely positioned to support and recognize initiatives by forward-thinking employers and multi-employer partnerships to sponsor and fund adult English language and numeracy programs for incumbent workers at the workplace. In assuming the lead role in promoting such initiatives as critical workforce priorities for the critical upcoming four-year period (through 2025), the WDB will prioritize the four requisite strategies listed above across four ongoing WDB core responsibilities:

- **Planning and Policy:** Formation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Adult English Language Proficiency and Numeracy under the sponsorship of the WDB’s Planning Committee was listed as a priority initiative under the WDB’s WIOA 4-Year plan approved for implementation beginning July 1, 2021. The new information from this report will be incorporated into our upcoming update of the plan (to be completed prior to July 1, 2023), allowing these findings to inform WDB priorities and plans through June 30, 2025. The WDB’s Planning Committee will assume responsibility for continuously bringing promising recommendations and actions related to improving local adult English language in our local workforce and workplaces to the full WDB for approval and implementation.
- **Increased Funding:** The WDB has identified ongoing low/flat federal funding of basic Title II adult basic education programs as a major barrier to building the training capacity required to close growing gaps between the low English language skills of many Berks County residents and the higher requirements for attractive careers in key local industries like manufacturing, construction, and healthcare. While the WDB’s annual WIOA “formula” funds are largely restricted to uses other than adult basic education, the WDB will actively seek other sources of funding over the next three years (including federal and state discretionary grants) to help build the local capacity of community-based partners to address these gaps.
- **Convening:** As Berks County’s employer-led, publicly funded workforce development planning agency, the WDB is well-positioned to serve as an “honest broker” across all local partners offering adult English language training programs inside and outside of the workplace. Through the work of this Ad Hoc Taskforce over the past six months, the WDB has developed a deeper understanding of some of the unique strengths and capacities of our dedicated community partners engaged in this important and underappreciated work. Just as importantly, through this work the WDB’s Planning Committee and staff have built closer working relationships and fostered cooperation among our partners in engaging with local employers and community members struggling with the challenges outlined in this report. Over the next three years, the WDB will regularly convene partners and employers to explore cooperative solutions, including shared employer access to flexible, industry-friendly training programs for employees.
- **Education and Outreach:** A major driver behind this report is the shared understanding of the WDB and our adult education partners, that English language skills deficits among a large portion of our most available adult workforce has not been well understood by local government leaders, funders, and employers. Increasing the understanding of local employers is particularly critical so that they can accelerate the internal process changes needed to maximize access to an emerging workforce eager to contribute to their business

success but who primarily speak Spanish. Beginning with the anticipated acceptance of this report by the WDB at their regular quarterly meeting in June 2022, the WDB Planning Committee and staff will implement outreach and education initiatives targeted to raising awareness of these challenges and opportunities as well as promoting best practices to address these challenges.

APPENDIX A

I. Ad Hoc Taskforce Timeline

- October 21, 2021 – Kickoff/Organizational Meeting
- Information Gathering Meetings with Local Employers (Virtual vis MS Teams or Zoom)
 - December 15, 2021 – Manufacturing/Construction/Utilities (Hosted by WDB)
 - January 12, 2022 – Healthcare and Social Assistance (Hosted by Literacy Council)
 - February 15, 2022 – Hospitality/Retail/Other Services (Hosted by Literacy Council)
 - February 23, 2022 – Hospitality – Restaurants and Hotels (Sponsored by PA Americana Region / Visitor’s Bureau)
- In Person Community Listening Sessions to Understand Real and Potential Barriers
 - March 23, 2022 – RACC with assistance from Literacy Council of Reading-Berks.
 - April 2, 2022 – BLWDC with assistance from Centro Hispano.
 - April 24, 2022 – St. Peter’s Church coordinated by I-LEAD.
- May 17, 2022 – Writing Team Completes Draft Report
- May 20, 2022 – Review Report with Planning Committee
- May 27, 2022 – Final Comments / Recommendations due back to Writing Team.
- June 17, 2022 – Final Report Presented to full WDB for Acceptance

II. Ad Hoc Taskforce Members

- Co-Chairperson: **Dr. Anna Weitz.** Retired RACC President, Berks County Workforce Development Board (WDB) Planning Committee member, Wyomissing Foundation Project Consultant and Literacy Council of Reading-Berks Board member.
- Co-Chairperson: **Dan Fogarty.** COO of the Berks County WDB and ARP Berks Business Continuity and Economic Development Advisory Committee member
- **Auria Bradley.** Director of Career Training, Community Education & Professional Development – RACC; Berks County WDB member
- **Ryan Breisch** – Executive Director, Literacy Council of Reading – Berks; WDB One Stop Oversight Committee member
- **Ashley Chambers.** Senior Vice President of Community Impact, United Way of Berks County (UWBC); Berks County WDB member
- **Marcelino Colón, Jr.** Vice President of Economic Development and Fundraising - Centro Hispano Daniel Torres Inc.
- **Darleen Garcia.** Executive Director, Berks Latino Workforce Development Corp. (BLWDC); ARP Berks Business Continuity and Economic Development Advisory Committee member; WDB Training & Industry Partnership Committee member
- **Bob Harrop.** Vice President – Personnel, East Penn Manufacturing Corporation; Berks County WDB member
- **Crystal Seitz** – President, Pennsylvania’s Americana Region
- **Hector Torres** - Director, I-Lead Adult Education Center
- **Dr. Anne Zayaitz** - Retired Kutztown University Provost, Berks County WDB Planning Committee member

APPENDIX B

New Hire “Churn” and Retention Challenges in Key Local Industry Sectors

Current Situation:

- Continuing a worrisome trend that preceded the pandemic, our Berks County Workforce Development Area continues to lead all large local labor markets in the Commonwealth in “**new hire churn**”.
- Increasingly, local employers must focus attention on employee retention as well as recruitment.
- Local employers may need to support (even sponsor) efforts to build skills in **Applied Math** and **English-Language Learning** to your long-term talent attraction, retention, and workforce development needs.

Combined Employer Listening Session Responses by Industry Sector:

1. Throughout 2021, have you had increased trouble recruiting and retaining entry-level employees at your company?

Manufacturing:

- Employer #6: HR people are stressed out. People are not showing up for interviews.
- Employer #1: There is quantity of applicants but not quality. We are a second chance employer and even there we face challenges of people not following up interviews. Interviews with many applicants that do show up indicate they don’t fully grasp the entry-level aptitudes necessary for the job. Wages are a big competition.
- Employer #9: Many applicants don’t respond to employer requests for follow-up even after 3-4 attempts. A lot of entry-level positions have been filled; however, skilled positions are a lot more difficult to fill as many qualified applicants are offered incentives by their employer to stay put so they don’t pursue an offer.
- Employer #11: Entry levels positions can be filled but finding qualified people presents a real challenge. There is often no follow through for interviews. Eight people might need to be called to interview for one position because so many applicants do not respond or fail to show.
- Employer #2: Language is not such an issue now. Our employees face other barriers. The work environment to manufacture and process used plastics is not a pleasant one. It is cold in the winter and hot in summer and odorous as well. We are a 24-hour company consisting of 12-hour shifts with dayshift predominantly the preferred request. Our wages/benefits are competitive. We are currently below staffing needs by nearly 50 employees.
- Employer #25: 2021 was difficult. People did not show up for work. We are working on improving our wages and we offer shift differentials. However, it is difficult to get people in the door in the manufacturing environment. PTO is available. We have ≈300 hourly/salaried employees and we employ some temps where English speaking is necessary due to the technology we use in our industry (printing). We have made movement toward accelerating our onboarding protocols (faster drug testing, etc.). We maintain a 24/5 workweek with some weekend/holiday work, as needed. People generally want to work first shift.

Construction/Utilities:

- Employer #4: There is a lack of follow through from candidates. Entry level people are applying but it is more difficult to fill mid-level (skilled) positions. With senior carpenters retiring, there is no one qualified to fill the positions.

Social Services and Healthcare

- Employer #20: Yes, it is increasingly difficult to fill both full and part-time positions. We experienced serious shortages even though we received a lot of applicants for the positions. We were able to maintain childcare services for the community and now increasingly for our employees as well. We are working to improve employee at-work experience for better retention.
- Employer #19: We have faced great difficulty in filling administrative positions. We offer ample benefits for the positions but even then, interest hasn't been strong. Our office is in Reading.
- Employer #17: Our pay rates are not competitive, and applicants have failed drug tests. Often, just communicating our drug testing protocol results in no applicant response to our job offer.
- Employer #15: We have had a lot of positions open and receive many applications, but we are not finding good candidates. Sometimes we are ghosted due to applicants taking other job offers.
- Employer #16: I just began a new position with a new employer in this sector. At my previous employer in this same sector, there were a lot of applicants but limited follow-ups with no shows and ghosting occurring. Some long-term employees are retiring or leaving for a change. Increased staff benefits were instituted to retain people.
- Employer #14: We have expanded into apprenticeships and healthcare has become our spectrum, particularly long-term senior living. Career pathways from clinical nursing upwards to executives have been established. Positions are maintained by offering raises twice during apprenticeships while at the same time skill sets are maintained and grown. Some grants have been received to pay for PPE. All aspects of hiring had to be analyzed, tracked, and timed. Consequently, our onboarding process has been revamped. Our drug testing policy has also changed.

Hotel and Restaurants

- Employer #26: Yes. We are open 24-7, weekends and holidays. English is not a barrier-our workforce is mixed, and we can overcome any communications problems. Our problem is getting people to show up for interviews and then actually have them showing up for work when they are hired. Finally, we need them to remain on the job. Labor is a big issue as well as supply chain. We have tried sign-on bonuses of \$1,000 after 3 months working, even for entry level positions and, based on wage surveys we've performed, we have increased our entry-level wages by 35%-55%. Shift work requirements are also an issue. Childcare and home-schooling needs are sometimes a big issue for our employees, and we have adjusted our PTO policy to be flexible. We offer PTO after 6 months.
- Employer # 30: We cannot find anyone who wants to work as a dishwasher. They would rather stay home and collect unemployment compensation or other government benefits. We are turning down lots of banquet business because of a lack of workers. I hired a bartender who quit after two days. Many have left our hospitality industry during the pandemic. People I hire or want to hire just don't show up.

- Employer #28: I had to turn away over one hundred customers at my downtown restaurant on a weeknight earlier this week because of a lack of staff. I have had to limit my hours of operation to 4-8 pm, Monday through Saturday. My retention of experienced staff is OK, but even though I have increased wages, I cannot find new workers to keep up with the return of my business. People just don't show up.
- Employer #27: I also cannot find bartenders or dishwashers. People don't want to work weekends which is when I have the greatest need for staff.
- Employer #29: Our facility has gone through so many changes over the past two years that we are operating with a skeleton staff. We have been able to keep our housekeeping staff. We made a strategic decision to stay away from what was once a lucrative banquet business at our hotel due to a lack of workers. We tried but had to close our a-la-carte restaurant. We continue to see low demand for rooms.

2. Over the past year, have you relaxed employment standards for new hires? If so, how?

Manufacturing:

- Employer #1: We have not relaxed standards. We already had a broad scope of backgrounds from which to hire. Management is advised not to reduce hiring requirements.
- Employer #6: Some requirements for unskilled positions have been modified to reflect the entry-level individual's experience level and identify training to remediate. Requirements for skilled positions must stay the same to meet operational requirements.
- Employer #5: Our company has a very similar situation. We have a lot of entry-level positions. >10% of hires who accept offers turn out to be no shows. We do not test for marijuana, but we are not sure that has helped in being able to fill positions. We are training new workers constantly. Even then, our managers are stressed.
- Employer #9: COVID has changed the interview process. Our screening questions have been relaxed a bit but not the hiring standards. We will reach out to applicants if some applicant info is missing where in the past we might have simply moved on to the next candidate. Applicants come in-person for at least one interview. Emphasis is on successful onboarding of new hires.
- Employer #10: We have not had to relax employment standards. We previously managed attendance on a firm point system but have since removed it. We continue to do background checks and drug testing. We have relaxed some leave policies. Shift work staffing is a struggle.
- Employer #25: We have adjusted our point system standards to become more flexible with off the job scheduling, (e.g., medical appointments) to retain new hires but advance notice is required.

Construction and Utilities

- Employer #8: Standards are always being raised at our company and in our industry. It's all about training. Our company needs 300 highly qualified people. We use curriculum to train the trainer. 80% of our workers work outside so COVID is not as much of an employment issue as wage and work ethic.
- Employer #3: The definition of entry-level positions remains the same. Some skill sets bring people in the door, but there is an unprecedented amount of turnover. We are not

going to change our standards. A person with 30 years-experience cannot be replaced overnight and replacements in field positions now include a five-year progression plan

Social Services and Healthcare

- Employer #20: A relaxed preliminary drug screening policy has been instituted. We are working on cross training part-time employees to move into full-time positions. We are looking at educational requirements on resumes as preferred rather than required. Experience in a field is another important aspect to be considered. We have 9 participants in an industry certification program. We offer childcare to employees and are able to refer childcare to other available locations. Applicant interviews have changed from in person to virtual.
- Employer #19: Looking at revising standards for setting up interviews. Current process not good.

Hotel and Restaurants

- Employer #26: We have relaxed standards to some degree. We have instituted creative scheduling over the three shifts. We have lessened our work experience requirements. We are attracting many more “non-conventional” hiring candidates than we had two years ago. We had a policy on no visible tattoos but have relaxed that requirement to only no facial tattoos.
- Employer #30: People can make good money in the restaurant and banquet business if they are willing to work hard and hustle. The sky is the limit and workers can readily make \$25-\$30 per hours with tips. Guests have been very generous and especially now appreciate good service. We have raised base wages \$2-\$3 per hour and will increase them another 20% in April. Our workplace expectations and policies have become “useless”. Staff do what they want to do.
- Employer #28: I agree that we need to raise wages, but I don’t expect that to solve the problem. The staff knows that they can’t easily be replaced so we have adjusted certain rules and expectations. For example, we have loosened up on using cell phones while at work.
- Employer #27: We have also increased base pay for housekeeping and front desk positions. Bartenders make a lot more, \$25-\$30 per hour including tips.

3. Is the overall level of Applied Math skills among your new hires acceptable to support future company growth?

Manufacturing:

- Employer #6: A new assessment for general cognitive ability is being utilized for new hires with criteria focused on cognitive ability, numerical reasoning (not high math), and basic mechanical examples included to determine training needs, but it is not trackable yet.

Construction/Utilities:

- Employer #8: Our company actively recruits from CTCs (average 6-8 CTC grad new-hires annually). Any training in necessary math is included after hiring and employees are ready to go after training. Good attendance, good skills, open to learning, and a positive work ethic all contribute to a good hire.

- Employer #3: Math skills are not as important for new hires. There is no pre-hire math assessment. We are more focused on followers of safety rules, as well as honesty, trustworthiness, and dependability.

Social Services and Healthcare

- Employer #17: The level of Applied Math skills doesn't really affect us too much except, to a small degree, in our retail positions.
- Employer #22: Applied Math skills are not measured among our employees.

Hotel and Restaurants:

- Employer #26: We have relaxed standards to some degree. We have instituted creative scheduling over the three shifts. We have lessened our work experience requirements. We are attracting
- Employer #28: Years ago, we worked with the Literacy Council but now, many people are not really interested in learning English.
- Employer #30: People don't want to learn English. They refuse to do so. Banquet servers and food runners don't need to speak English and I need to find 14-16 more people to support the upcoming wedding and prom season. I have no idea how I will find the people I need for Easter in April and Mothers' Day in May.

4. Is the overall level of Applied Math skills among your incumbent workforce acceptable to support future company growth?

Manufacturing:

- Employer #10: Some line workers do not want to move up; others do want to move up in position. New training for advancement has been explored and some are now ready for the next step. Math skills are required. A lot of our employees are Spanish speaking and ESL classes would be helpful for career advancement.

Construction/Utilities

- Employer #3: Math skills are not an issue. We are seeing more technology capable people among younger people. This is a plus for hiring as learning new job-related technology for field work will be required. The longer-term, more experienced incumbents tend to shy away from technology. We can do more training, including hands-on field tasks, at the new facility

Social Services and Healthcare – No comments

5. If not, what strategies have you deployed or plan to deploy that address the shortfall in Applied Math skills among new hires and incumbent workers?

There were no specific answers to question 5 in any of the four sessions.

6. Is the overall level of English Language skills among your new hires acceptable to support future company growth?

Manufacturing

- Employer #5: No. We have translated a lot of our documents to Spanish, but we need supervisors who are bi-lingual. Fortunately, our HR Manager is bilingual in Spanish and English.
- Employer #2: We have a goldmine in our ability to recruit Spanish speaking employees. However, we had trouble putting bi-lingual teams together and finding leaders that can understand the varied ESL cultures. There is a lot of difference among cultures and there remain some leadership training issues. There is value in everyone. We must build a culture of experienced bi-lingual leaders with training in leadership to be successful. We are a multinational company. There has been concern regarding a local public perception of the company as having an ESL hiring focus which may discourage some non-ESL job seekers from applying.
- Employer #10: It depends on the individual if they want to progress within the company. Many of our employees are Spanish speaking and ESL classes could be helpful for career advancement. We try to utilize ESL classes as we are open to hiring candidates with limited English skills, especially for entry-level positions. Bi-lingual ability is mandatory for all Line Leads. It is more problematic for workers to be mechanics unless they have good English skills. We would like to promote bi-lingual workers, but they must be qualified.
- Employer #6: Yes – we pay well and are not a large facility so we mostly are able to find the qualified workers we need. To date, we are not attracting candidates with limited English Language (EL) skills thought we would like to further diversify our workforce.
- Employer #1: Our company is manufacturing but we do 98% custom work which requires specific training. Instead of focusing on a supervisors’ ability to translate between languages, we partner with employees to translate and avoid the use of virtual translator technology due to its usual lack of idiomatic interpretation. We must think outside the box to understand different cultures. Employer #1 has an effective employee referral program.
- Employer #25: All new hires must speak English. Moving forward, we would like to schedule ESL classes to promote advancement.

Construction and Utilities

- Employer #4: This is an especially challenging area. We miss some good opportunities to hire candidates because we do not have enough qualified bilingual leaders on staff. Safety is always an issue at our company and because of this ESL presents a serious barrier.
- Employer #3: Yes

Social Services and Healthcare

- Employer #22: We have started to see a greater case management need for English Language skills to serve our customers, including how to write a letter and communicate. This skillset could become a significant part of the administrative mix moving forward. There is a growing diversity of needs. More of a communication issue right now for some ESL customers.
- Employer #20: We have staff resources for translating, but we also have printed materials that need to be translated. We are working with the Berks Latino Workforce Development Corp. (BLWDC) for students to provide this needed document translation. We also want to train English-speaking employees to learn Spanish. Teaching staff “survival Spanish” is on our radar. We do look to hire bilingual staff. We have reached out to the Literacy

Council to increase our staff's knowledge. Both the Literacy Council and the BLWDC have offered great resources.

- Employer #14: There is a need for certification/licensing exams in healthcare to be provided in Spanish. The need is there for the ESL candidate to understand the questions.

7. Is the overall level of English Language skills among your incumbent workforce acceptable to support future company growth?

Manufacturing:

- Employer #2: If an employee wants to progress beyond an entry level position, obviously English language skills are necessary for more highly skilled positions. ESL classes are available for anyone who wishes to move on. Some employees are perfectly happy to remain in their positions. We have connected with the Literacy Council and seven employees have committed to participating in ESL classes twice a week, one-hour classes on their own time. These classes are paid for by the company which is an international company. We have recruited engineers and machine operators from Central America. Mexico transfers, including professional, are attending ESL classes as English is required. All leadership are fully bilingual. We have found the process for sponsoring the necessary working visas to be difficult, but the payoff is worth it.
- Employer #10: All our managers are bilingual, and our employees represent 17 countries. We are working on getting all documents translated into Spanish. We are considering both Spanish/English and English/Spanish classes for cross training purposes and movement of personnel. We are looking to partner with the Berks Latino Workforce Development Corporation (BLWDC) for ESL beginner classes and are also looking at RACC training program options.

8. If not, what strategies have you deployed or plan to deploy at address the shortfall in English Language skills among new hires and incumbent workers?

Manufacturing

- Employer #2: If an employee wants to progress beyond an entry level position, obviously English language skills are necessary for more highly skilled positions. ESL classes are available for anyone who wishes to move on. Some employees are perfectly happy to remain in their positions. We have connected with the Literacy Council. Seven of our employees have committed to participating in ESL classes twice a week, one-hour classes on their own time. These classes are paid for by the company. We are an international company we have recruited engineers and machine operators from Central America and Mexico. Some of our intra-company transfers, including professional staff, are attending ESL classes as English is required for these positions at our facility. All of our local leadership team members are fully bilingual
- Employer #10: All our managers are bilingual, and our employees represent 17 countries. We are working on getting all workplace documents translated into Spanish. We are considering both Spanish/English and English/Spanish classes for cross training purposes and movement of personnel. We are looking to partner with the Berks Latino Workforce Development Corporation (BLWDC) for ESL beginner classes and are also looking at RACC training program options.

Social Services and Healthcare – No comments

9. Would you be willing to join with community partners to help your employees improve their Applied Math skills? Their English Language skills? If so, which is the greater priority at your company?

Manufacturing:

- Employer #1: We work with CTCs as well as co-ops and interns. Both are priorities but math skills are most important.
- Employer #11: ESL is a priority and would definitely help. Our company is not equipped for a Spanish speaking population
- Employer #2: We have partnered with the Literacy Council and its 15-week ESL program. Many employees are eager to learn the English language. Eight persons have offered to come onsite an hour early twice a week for this program. Also, some English-speaking employees want to take Spanish classes.
- Employer #5: Our barrier is definitely language related and I would love to know more about the Literacy Council and programs that were offered.

Construction and Utilities:

- Employer #4: The language barrier is a priority. Our company does not have the ability to teach language.
- Employer #8: Language is a priority, but off-site training is not easy to fit into schedules. On-site training would be better.

Social Services and Healthcare – No comments

Hotel and Restaurants

- Employer #26: We are not opposed to offering ESL classes but at the end of the day people must be willing to put forth the effort and want to move ahead. If individuals are willing to consistently show up for work and training, we will accept the financial commitment to train them to grow with us.

10. Strategies going into 2022?

Manufacturing

- Employer #9: Our internal group develops skills requirements utilizing process experts. To better place supervisors and team leads in shift positions where they can provide the best assessment of employee aptitude, they are grouped by their propensity for either a process or a people focus. We took advantage of the leadership training classes offered by GRCA (Greater Reading Chamber Alliance).
- Employer #2: The Latino community likes to bring in family, neighbors, and friends to be hired at the same establishment. We must understand this and be prepared to deal with issues relating to Spanish as their primary, if only, language. Some issues have arisen, e.g., carpooling. If one person doesn't show up, all do not show up. If one quits, they all quit. Sometimes non-work issues find their way into the workplace and employers should be prepared accordingly.

Construction and Utilities

- Employer #8: Employer #8 continues to cultivate its relationship with the CTCs and has been in conversation with school district superintendents to promote career training. Discussions are held among team leaders in the circle sharing questions and comments with HR.

Social Services and Healthcare

- Employer #14: One interesting facet of grant funding is that skill sets and wrap-around services to overcome obstacles are required to be provided. COVID exacerbated challenges, including childcare. Increasingly, HR is not just to fill jobs, but must also help people stay in their jobs.
- Employer #15: Learning how to act appropriately makes a difference in employment. Learning how to react, how to show up are aspects very much appreciated by employers. The program endeavors to change a way of thinking and responding. All goes through the WIN assessment which includes skill assessments and remediation. It has been a very successful program. The biggest problem with participants has been transportation. Many manufacturers appreciate those who come out of the eight-week program. Employers often shown up at the graduations. BCPS has had over 200 graduates.
- Employer #21: “How does housing fit into these discussions?” People are applying for jobs but are not staying in them. There are many people who in their totality of life have experienced very little stability. Housing that is affordable can accommodate economic thresholds, so our ability to provide stable housing is important. So, how can we all collectively help? Through housing, jobs, and healthcare. Education is important but clean and affordable housing must be sustained. Businesses should be recruiting entry level employees and asking how can I help.
- Employer #22: Available housing is important, including rural areas. Transportation is also an issue in rural areas.
- Employer #20: We know what we need. There are employers who are not familiar with our services. We need some type of printed tool to distribute to employers.

Hotel and Restaurants:

- Employer #26: This has been a great discussion. We all have similar challenges. If someone wants to move up, they must have that spark. Management is not for every person. In hotels outside of Reading, many languages are commonly spoken in the workplace.
- Employer #30: We have relaxed standards to some degree. We have instituted creative scheduling. I don't see this turning around when people can get government rent assistance when they are making \$40,000 per year managing a convenience store.

APPENDIX C

Community Listening Session

Presented by RACC and the Literacy Council of Reading Berks

March 23, 2022, at the Miller Center for the Arts from 11 a.m. to 12 noon

(67 questionnaires with responses in English)

Question 1. If you were more proficient in English conversation, reading, and writing do you feel that you would have more job opportunities?

67 responded "yes"

Question 2. How many of you would be interested in a career or job in manufacturing, healthcare, human services, and or education?

8 answered "no"

53 answered "yes"

One person expressed an interest in a career in accounting.

Do you currently work in any of these settings?

20 answered "no"

35 answered "yes"

Question 3. Have you ever had a problem at work because you didn't have the right English and math skills for the assigned job? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation.

45 answered "yes"

Examples of "yes" answers. Many were exact or similar answers regarding limited English and not being able to understand supervisors' instructions. One person answered about mathematical skills.

"I might make a mistake if I don't (hear) the instruction."

"Because when I need something, I need to ask for somebody who speaks English and Spanish."

"Sometime(sic) I have problem with customer that have different accent."

"Because sometimes my boss I don't understand."

"Because I want to apply for inspector but for my English I can't."

"I never work in a place with the English, just Spanish, but I would try."

"I needed to speak and understand more English to get that job."

"I didn't understand my boss or his/her instructions."

"I have had problems at work because my English skills were limited."

"I didn't understand my boss."

"I didn't understand the instructions."

"I needed help with the instructions for my new job."

"My English skills/conversation was limited."

"I cannot understand some cliente (sic) who ask me to tell him what material were sent to him in the lost or if the lost is complete."

"I had difficulties expressing myself and reading."

"I work a place where everybody speak English, and my supervisor or some of my colleagues talk to me very quickly and I can't understand it. I ask them to repeat it or say it in a different way."

"They were explaining to me how to access a job on the computer, and I didn't understand."

"Yes, I have because I didn't understand an instruction, I grabbed a different ingredient at kitchen. I was confused."

"I have not had **mathematical problems** at work but I have to talk with children and parents."

"In my job I have a problem where they think that I'm not good enough to train the new coworker."

"Only the first few months that I started to work and then I learned, everything improved."

"The biggest problem I have is the pronunciation. When working in customer service, I have to communicate with clients, and sometimes it is difficult for them to understand me, since my pronunciation is not very good."

"I had to work in very hard jobs because I didn't know English. There were opportunities to work in the office, but because I didn't know English I couldn't apply for these opportunities."

"If my English was better, I will find a job related with what I studied."

"I sometime don't understand specific instruction or what people tell me. I feel shy."

"I have many problems because I can't communication(sic) with my partners and I could not be promoted to another area because of English."

"Just this week I had to talk to my manager and for her to understand me better I had to turn to my friend who knows English."

17 answered "no" (2 of the 17 responded that they haven't yet worked)

<p>Question 4. Do you think that being fully able to read instructions at work even detailed ones in English will make a difference in workplace experience? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation.</p>
--

56 answered "yes"

5 answered "no"

Many responded similarly, but the following are some of the responses:

"I am afraid of doing something wrong."

"I might make a big mistake if I don't understand the instructions."

"If you understand everything you can do your work better."

"You have more open door."

"You have the big chance to grow in the job."

"I will got the job that I wanted."

"Know how to read in English can give me the opportunity to do more and be

proactive.”

“I find it difficult to read mail in English, understand my supervisor’s instruction and talking to people at the doctor’s office.”

“Talking to people in stores and other agencies.”

“I think I have some inconvenience to fill out some instructions.”

“Yes, because the company would keep you pending for promotions in higher-ranking and better-paid positions.”

“I think yes a little with the help of God.”

“To show that I understand correctly.”

“Because being able to read, talk and explain properly in English is a key at your workplace. That will break the barrier of being mistreated unfairly,”

“Because you can do the work at the right way, because you met and know the instructions. You know what you have to do and you may have to be careful in specific area of danger.”

“I am learning English at RACC College, and that helped me a lot.”

“In any work environment it is always important to follow the rules. Workers will do their jobs better and themselves better if they follow the rules.”

“I would have more opportunities to earn better salary.”

“If you understand the instructions, you are not going to be lost and you feel confident of what you are doing.”

“I have many problems because I can’t communication(sic) with my partners and I could not be promoted to another area because of English.”

“Just this week I had to talk to my manager and for her to understand me better I had to turn to my friend who knows English.”

(10 questionnaires with questions and responses in Spanish)

Question 1. If you were more proficient in English conversation, reading, and writing do you feel that you would have more job opportunities?

10 answered “yes”

Question 2. How many of you would be interested in a career or job in manufacturing, healthcare, human services, and or education?

- I am interested in medical care or human services.
- I do not currently work in these areas, but I want to pursue a career here at RACC.
- Yes, I am interested in realizing a solid career and at the moment I do not work.
- I am interested. I do not currently work in these settings.
- I would be very interested in employment where I can put my knowledge at the disposal of the community and also to train in this area.
- I don't currently work in manufacturing, but I'm interested in learning and working in this area.
- I like to apply my knowledge I have of my country.
- Yes, I would agree.

- *Yes, I would like to explore the area of human services.*
- *I am interested in any area that I think I believe in personally. I currently do not work in this area.*

Question 3. *Have you ever had a problem at work because you didn't have the right English and math skills for the assigned job? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation.*

- *One questionnaire was missing the second page.*
- *No*
- *No answer*
- *No answer*
- *No*
- *I haven't worked where it is necessary to speak English.*
- *At work all speak English and learn the program*
Yes, because I do not understand perfectly what they inform me and bad communication causes errors.
- *I find it difficult to capture the instructions dictated by my boss.*
- *One questionnaire was missing the second page.*

Question 4. *Do you think that being fully able to read instructions at work even detailed ones in English will make a difference in workplace experience? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation.*

- *One questionnaire was missing the second page.*
- *Yes, because it would make the work more fluid. Do not have to look for someone to translate the instructions.*
- *I believe so and should be accommodated since this is an English-speaking country and I will live here over the next years.*
- *No*
- *No answer*
- *No answer*
- *I think it's not just reading, but also speaking.*
- *Yes, I need to understand English more. Thanks for the opportunity.*
- *Yes, because by understanding the language, there would not be so many errors and my speech could be more perfect.*
- *Totally if you understand perfectly what the supervisor wants and the instructions of how to perform the work.*

APPENDIX D

Community Listening Session at Berks Latino Workforce Development, Inc. (Berks Tec Centro)
 April 2, 2022, 1:30-3:30 PM

Self-Reported Survey Responses

	Question No. 1				Question No. 2			
	English	Spanish	Yes/No		English	Spanish	Yes/No	
Questionnaire Self Written Responses	If you were more proficient in English conversation, reading and writing, do you feel that you would have more job opportunities?	<i>Si tuvieras mayor destreza para conversar, leer y escribir en ingles, ¿Crees que tendrías mas oportunidades de trabajo?</i>	Yes	No	Would you be interested in a career or job in manufacturing, healthcare, human services, and/or education? Do you currently work in any of these fields?	<i>¿Cuántos de ustedes están interesados en una carrera o trabajo en manufactura, servicios médicos, servicios humanos y/o educación? ¿Actualmente trabajas en algunos de estas áreas?</i>	Yes	No
1	Bilingual people have better employment opportunities.	<i>Las personas bilingües tienen mayor oportunidades de empleo.</i>	1		No	<i>No</i>		1
2	Yes. Without any doubt, English is vital in this country.	<i>Sí. Sin duda, el inglés es vital en este país.</i>	1		Yes and No.	<i>Sí y No.</i>	0.5	0.5
3	Yes.	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes, it interests me.	<i>Sí, a mi me interesa.</i>	1	
4	Yes.	<i>Sí</i>	1		I'm interested	<i>Estoy Interesada</i>	1	

	Question No. 1		Yes	No	Question No. 2		Yes	No
5	Definitely yes because it allows for better communication with staff.	<i>Claro que sí porque mejor comunicación con el personal.</i>	1		I would like to learn English and have a better opportunity to obtain a good job.	<i>Me interesa aprender inglés y tener la oportunidad para un buen trabajo.</i>	1	
6	Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes. I am interested in nursing. I am currently working in home care.	<i>Sí. Estoy interesada en enfermería. Actualmente estoy trabajando home care.</i>	1	
7	Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1	
8	Yes. It is necessary to know how to use the language.	<i>Si, es muy necesario manejar el idioma.</i>	1		I currently do not work in any of these areas.	<i>Actualmente no trabajo en ninguna de estas areas.</i>	0	0
9	Yes. It is important to read and write in English. It opens the doors to employment and it is important because from there on, it is better for your future.	<i>Sí. Es importante leer y escribir en inglés. Te abre las puertas en todo los trabajos y es importante porque de ahí en adelante es mejor para tu futuro.</i>	1		I am interested.	<i>Me gustaría.</i>	1	
10	No.	<i>No.</i>		1	No.	<i>No.</i>		1
11	No.	<i>No.</i>		1	No	<i>No</i>		1
12	Yes.	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes.	<i>Sí</i>	1	
13	Definitely Yes. I would have more job opportunities.	<i>Claro que sí porque tendría más oportunidad de trabajo.</i>	1		No, but I would like to. The problem is I cannot speak English.	<i>No, pero me gustaria. Pero no se hablar inglés.</i>	0.5	0.5

	Question No. 1		Yes	No	Question No. 2		Yes	No
14	Yes, because it is a tool to survive in this country.	<i>Sí, porque es una herramienta para sobrevivir en este país.</i>	1		Yes, I am interested and so are my children. We are currently unemployed.	<i>Estoy interesada al igual que mis hijos y no estamos trabajando.</i>	1	
15	Definitely yes because not knowing English limits our daily lives.	<i>Por supuesto que sí porque el no saber inglés nos limita en el diario vivir.</i>	1		Yes, I am interested and I am currently unemployed.	<i>Sí, estoy interesada y actualmente no estoy trabajando.</i>	1	
16	Definitely yes.	<i>Sí, por supuesto.</i>	1		I am interested. I currently work in home care for elderly persons.	<i>Estoy interesada. Actualmente trabajo en el área de servicios de cuidados a persona mayores.</i>	1	
17	Yes, because there are better job opportunities if you are able to communicate with others.	<i>Sí, porque hay mayor oportunidad de trabajo al poder comunicarse mejor con las demás personas.</i>	1		I am interested in these fields. I am currently unemployed.	<i>Estoy interesado en estas carreras. Actualmente no tengo empleo.</i>	1	
18	Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1	
19	Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes. I would love to continue studying.	<i>Sí, me encantaría seguir con mis estudios.</i>	1	
20	Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1		Maybe in the future.	<i>Quizas en el futuro.</i>		
21	Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1		Yes	<i>Sí</i>	1	

		Question No. 1		Yes	No	Question No. 2		Yes	No
22	Yes		Sí	1		There are five in my household. I am currently unemployed.	<i>En casa somos 5 personas. No trabajo Actualmente.</i>		
23	Without a doubt. There would be a great array of employment opportunities and greater comprehension.		<i>¡Sin lungar a dudas! Se abriría para mi un abanico de oportunidades de trabajo y comprensión.</i>	1		I am particularly interested in a career in education, particularly in organizational leadership and professional development.	<i>Yo estoy interesado en una carrera educativa particularmente en la información profesional y desarrollo organizacional.</i>	1	
TOTALS				21	2			16	4
				Yes	No			Yes	No

Question No. 3 (English)				Question No. 4 (English)			
English	Spanish	Yes/No		English	Spanish	Yes/No	
Have you ever had a problem at work because you didn't have the right English and math skills for the assigned job? If yes, please explain.	<i>¿Alguna vez has tenido un problema en el trabajo porque no tenías las habilidades adecuadas de inglés y matemáticas para el trabajo asignado? Si tu respuesta es sí, por favor explicar.</i>	Yes	No	Do you think that being fully able to read instructions at work even detailed ones in English will make a difference in workplace experience? If yes, please explain.	<i>¿Crees que ser completamente capaz de leer instrucciones en el trabajo, incluso las detallas en inglés, macara la diferencia en la experiencia en el lugar de trabajo? Si tu respuesta es sí, por favor explicar.</i>	Yes	No
No	No	0	1	Yes	Si	1	0
Yes. I had to leave my job.	<i>Si. Tuve que dejar el trabajo.</i>	1		Yes.	Sí	1	

Question No. 3 (English)		Yes	No	Question No. 4 (English)		Yes	No
No	No	1		Yes, it would help obtain a better job position and a better salary.	<i>Sí. Ayudaría a una mejor posición y por ende mejor sueldo.</i>	1	
		1		Yes. It isn't easy when your boss speaks to you and you do not know what to respond or what to do.	<i>Sí. No es fácil cuando un jefe te habla y uno no sabe qué decir o qué hacer.</i>	1	
Yes. Because I do not dominate the English language, I have lost access to job opportunities. Additionally because I cannot communicate effectively in English, there have been times when I have been unable to order food at a restaurant.	<i>Sí. Por no saber inglés he perdido la oportunidad de obtener un trabajo. Por no saber comunicarme no he podido comprar comida en un restaurante.</i>	1		Definitely yes, because I would have better communication with staff/my co-workers and much more.	<i>Claro que sí por que tengo mejor comunicación con el personal y muchísima cosas más.</i>	1	
Yes, in communicating.	<i>Sí, en comunicarme.</i>	1		No	No		1
No.	No.		1	No.	No.		1
No.	No.		1	No	No.		1
Yes.	Sí	1					
No	No		1	No	No		1

Question No. 3 (English)		Yes	No	Question No. 4 (English)		Yes	No
Not until now, but we should prepare so that we can avoid going through these situations.	<i>Hasta ahora no, pero debemos de prepararnos para no tener que pasar por ante mencionada situación.</i>		1	Yes, because it's the language of this country. There are places that utilize the Spanish language, and this allows you to go about doing what you need in the comfort of your native language. But understanding English is what will mark the difference.	<i>Sí, porque es el idioma de este país y aunque hay lugares que manejan el español, que te permite desarrollarte en tu idioma, pero claro que el manejo del idioma inglés marcará siempre la diferencia.</i>	1	
No.	No.		1	Yes. Because you can communicate better with work people. (NOTE: This was answered in English)	<i>Si, porque puede comunicarse mejor con los compaeros de trabajo.</i>	1	
No. I haven't had issues because my co-worker helps me. But it is naturally difficult to interact with my coworkers.	<i>No he tenido problema; mi compañero me ayuda. Pero es muy difícil interactuar con los compañeros.</i>		1	Yes. It would be good to interpret some instructions. It is very important for Hispanics.	<i>Sí, alguna señalización puedo interpretarla. Es muy importante para el hispano.</i>	1	
No, because until now, I have only worked with other Hispanics.	<i>No, porque hasta ahora sólo he trabajado con otros hispanos.</i>		1	Yes.	<i>Sí</i>	1	

Question No. 3 (English)		Yes	No	Question No. 4 (English)		Yes	No
No. I have not worked in this country because of the demand to know the English language. I know math very well.	<i>No. No he trabajado en este país ya que me exigen el inglés. Las matemáticas las entiendo bien.</i>		1	Yes, I have been able to read, but not entirely.	<i>Sí, puedo ser capaz de leer, pero no completamente.</i>	1	
No	No		1	Yes. I would have a better chance to understand the English language when it is spoken to me.	<i>Sí, tendría mejor oportunidad para entender las cosas que te hablan en inglés.</i>	1	
No	No		1	Yes, because I would have a better labor development.	<i>Sí, porque tendría mayor desenvolvimiento laboral.</i>	1	
No	No		1	Yes, it is important.	<i>Sí, es importante.</i>	1	
No.	No.		1	No.	No.		1
Yes. I have encountered these issues, particularly when trying to keep a conversation in English.	<i>Sí, me he topado con estos problemas, sobre todo, en el momento de mantener el diálogo en inglés.</i>	1		Yes. Especially in gaining potential opportunities.	<i>¡Desde luego! Principalmente se ganan oportunidades potenciales.</i>	1	
		7	14			15	5
		Yes	No			Yes	No

Community Listening Session at Berks Latino Workforce Development, Inc. (Berks Tec Centro)
 April 2, 2022, 1:30-3:30 PM

Case Notes collected by Volunteer Notetakers

	Question No. 1		Question No. 2	
	English	Spanish	English	Spanish
	<p>If you were more proficient in English conversation, reading and writing, do you feel that you would have more job opportunities?</p>	<p><i>Si tuvieras mayor destreza para conversar, leer y escribir en inglés, ¿Crees que tendrías mas oportunidades de trabajo?</i></p>	<p>Would you be interested in a career or job in manufacturing, healthcare, human services, and/or education? Do you currently work in any of these fields?</p>	<p><i>¿Cuántos de ustedes están interesados en una carrera o trabajo en manufactura, servicios médicos, servicios humanos y/o educación? ¿Actualmente trabajas en algunos de estas áreas?</i></p>
Notetaker 1				
Notetaker 1	<p>1. Group of people said yes</p>		<p>1. I would like to work in human services and education but I changed my mind because there are no opportunities for people who doesn't speak perfect English.</p>	
Notetaker 2				
Notetaker 2	<p>1. Yes, one of the students enrolled in the program feels like it is important because when you arrive to this country, Latinos are forced to take the job positions that others do not want. It's also difficult to go to doctors appointments.</p>	<p><i>1. Si, una estudiante del programa considera que es muy importante ya que cuando llegan al país los latinos tienen que tomar los trabajos que los demás no quieren. Además, hasta para ir a una cita médica se le complica.</i></p>	<p>1. Human Services.</p>	<p><i>1. Servicios Humanos.</i></p>
			<p>1. Human services and education, but I stopped trying because I was rejected due to my imperfect English.</p>	<p><i>1. Servicios Humanos y educación, pero desistió por que no era aceptada por no hablar perfectamente el inglés.</i></p>

	Question No. 1		Question No. 2	
Notetaker 3				
Notetaker 3	1. Yes, I consider it to be necessary to learn how to read, speak, and write. When we arrive to this country we do the work that others do not want to do. It is equally important when going to doctors appointments among other personal matters. It is never too late to learn.	<i>1. Si, considero que es necesario aprender a leer, conversar y escribir. Cuando llegamos a este país hacemos el trabajo que otros no quieren hacer. Igual es necesario para los asuntos médicos, las citas, entre otros asuntos personales. Nunca es tarde para empezar.</i>	1. I am interested in working in human services, especially in community development.	<i>1. Yo estoy interesada en trabajar en el servicio humano, específicamente en desarrollo comunitario.</i>
			2. I would have liked human services, but I have not done because my English speaking skills are imperfect.	<i>2. A mí me hubiese gustado estudiar servicios humanos, pero no lo hago porque no hablo perfectamente inglés.</i>

OTHER COMMENTS/OTROS COMENTARIOS

Additional questions asked by attendees: (English version) - 1. What are the requirements to study English and what does it entail? 2. Is an exam required to be admitted into college/university? If so, what can I do? How do I take those exams? (Spanish version): 1. Un participante hizo la siguiente pregunta: ¿En qué consiste y qué necesita para estudiar inglés?

(Spanish version): 1. ¿En qué consiste y qué necesita para estudiar inglés? 2. Para ingresar a la universidad, se debe tomar examen. ¿Qué se puede hacer? ¿Cómo tomar esos exámenes?

Question No. 3 (English)		Question No. 4 (English)	
English	Spanish	English	Spanish
<p>Have you ever had a problem at work because you didn't have the right English and math skills for the assigned job? If yes, please explain.</p>	<p><i>¿Alguna vez has tenido un problema en el trabajo porque no tenías las habilidades adecuadas de inglés y matemáticas para el trabajo asignado? Si tu respuesta es sí, por favor explicar.</i></p>	<p>Do you think that being fully able to read instructions at work even detailed ones in English will make a difference in workplace experience? If yes, please explain.</p>	<p><i>¿Crees que ser completamente capaz de leer instrucciones en el trabajo, incluso las detalladas en inglés, macara la diferencia en la experiencia en el lugar de trabajo? Si tu respuesta es sí, por favor explicar.</i></p>
Notetaker 1			
<p>1. I had to resign because I wasn't able to communicate with other people at jobs. It was difficult to perform the job without a clear understanding.</p>		<p>1. Yes, being able to fully understand makes a difference in my job performance.</p>	
<p>2. Yes, I experienced difficulties during my journey.</p>			
<p>3. Yes, I had difficulties during my human resources career. There were moments where I even wanted to quit.</p>			
Notetaker 2			
<p>1. One time they had to leave a job because when the manager would speak, they did not respond and therefore did not know what to respond.</p>	<p><i>1. Una vez tuvo que dejar el trabajo porque cuando el jefe le hablaba, no entendía y no sabía qué decir.</i></p>		
<p>2. They have found it difficult to keep a conversation in English.</p>	<p><i>2. Se ha encontrado con la dificultad para mantener una conversación en inglés.</i></p>		

Question No. 3 (English)		Question No. 4 (English)	
<p>3. I arrived five years ago. I do not comprehend well, but I established a goal. I didn't understand well in the different workplaces I was at, but some time ago I began to study the language locally at Berks Latino Workforce Development. I was also referred by them to a job opportunity. It was conducted entirely in English and it was a very successful interview.</p>	<p>3. <i>Vino hace 5 años. No entendía pero se fijó una meta. En los trabajos no entendía nada, pero hace un tiempo empezó a estudiar inglés local desde Berks Latino Workforce Development. Le refirieron a un trabajo. Fue totalmente en inglés y fue totalmente exitoso.</i></p>		
Notetaker 3			
<p>1. I had problems when my boss gave instructions.</p>	<p>1. <i>Tuve problemas cuando el jefe me daba instrucciones.</i></p>	<p>1. It gives me the ability to function better in the workplace. It is necessary to complete it.</p>	<p>1. <i>Me da mayor desenvolvimiento en el trabajo. Es una necesidad a completar.</i></p>
<p>2. When I arrived to this country, it was difficult to speak English. Recently I was called for a job interview... and it's possible to get through when you want to.</p>	<p>2. <i>Cuando llegue a este país se me hacía difícil hablar inglés. Hace poco me llamaron a una entrevista... Y de que se puede, se puede.</i></p>	<p>2. There are barriers and we can overcome them. We need to let the community know that we are not ignorant people. We must help people feel accomplished. Also, it's unjust, that if we do not comprehend English that people feel we are incapable of working or that we are uneducated.</p>	<p>2. <i>Hay barreras y podemos superarlas. Hay que sensibilizar a la comunidad de que no somos ignorantes. Hacerle creer que se siente realizado personalmente. Por lo tanto, es injusto que, si no sabemos inglés, por lo tanto, no sabemos trabajar o no somos educados.</i></p>

Question No. 3 (English)		Question No. 4 (English)	
3. It was very difficult for me when I arrived to this country. I confess that it was very difficult to speak English, but persistence is key. I suggest that you keep trying.	<i>3. Al llegar a este país fue muy difícil. Les confieso que se me hacía difícil hablar inglés, pero la persistencia es la clave. Mi invitación es que continúen...</i>		
4. Good afternoon. How is everyone? I am glad to see you here. I want to let you know that everything we try to accomplish can be achieved. Discipline is key to reaching goals, objectives, and dreams. Someone has to do the work, but there will be a time where you will need to decide what road to take. English is a barrier if you let it be, but you can achieve growth.	<i>4. ¡Buenas tardes! ¿Cómo están? Me contenta que estén aquí. Les quiero dejar saber que todo lo que nos proponamos se puede alcanzar. La disciplina es clave para alcanzar metas, objetivos, sueños. Alguien tiene que hacer el trabajo, pero llegara el momento en el que tu decidas que rumbo escoger. El Ingles se hace barrera si tu quieres, pero se puede avanzar.</i>		
5. I want to thank Berks Latino because they helped me find a job through their job fairs. I am grateful for that.	<i>5. Yo quiero agradecer a Berks Latino porque me apoyo en conseguir un empleo a través de sus ferias de empleo. Estoy agradecida por eso.</i>		

APPENDIX E

I-LEAD Community Workforce Listening Session April 24, 2022 at St. Peters Hall 1:30 to 2:30 pm

Present: Dan Fogarty, Angel Figueroa, Isamac Torres-Figueroa, Héctor Torres, Josephine Torres-Figueroa, Isabel Monterrosa, Angela Aponte, Marcelino Colon, Dr. Rafael Nunez

Participants: Mayobani Madera, María Rodríguez, Juana Alvarado, Miguel Angel, María De la Luz Rama, J. Cruz Rama Diaz, Wilson Payero, Manuel Ureña, Juana Alvarado, Alejandra Heredia, Anthony Acosta, Margaret Cadeau

Angel Figueroa welcomed everyone and assured them that we are here to listen to their concerns and assured them that they are safe and not to be afraid to voice their concerns. Angel turned it over to Isamac Torres-Figueroa.

Isamac thanked everyone in advance for taking the time out of their day to join us for this important conversation. She expressed that we want to hear about the work experiences of our ESL workers.

Questions/Answers:

1. If you were more proficient in English conversation, reading, and writing do you feel that you would have more job opportunities?

All responded "YES", they were asked Why?

(a) A Dr. in her county moved here and has had a lot of difficulties because of lack of knowing English and not being able to do here what she studied in her country. She is currently working as an Assistant Director at a Daycare. Hector asked her how he got the job that he has now. Her response was that it took 5 years because she had to get her degree validated, she had to fill out an application which cost \$200, her mom had to submit a sealed transcript. Josephine Torres-Boykins asked her what she did within those 5 years while she was waiting. She responded that she studied ESL, sold AVON, Mary Kay and studied.

Dr. Rafael Nunez mentioned that he would like I-LEAD to help individuals who are in the same position this lady was in. He is authorized to translate and certify transcripts and to validate all professional titles. All these individuals must learn English, and this is something he does as well.

(b) Another lady had an issue with a life insurance policy her husband purchased. Because of her lack of English when her husband passed away, she did not know what she needed to do and was not informed that she lost everything.

(c) A young man mentioned that this is a county that the 1st language is English. Everywhere you go they talk English. When you go places, they don't talk Spanish. It's important to talk their language. Knowing both languages is a benefit to the company.

(d) Another participant expressed his concern that he's only been here 5 months and applied at RACC to study English but it's full and was informed that they would contact him in 6 months. He is currently working at Amazon and got help filling out the application. He can't move up because he doesn't know the language but has mastered the job. He gets around with the language with the help of friends and uses google translate.

(e) A lot of the participants expressed their concerns with not being able to get into RACC because of them being full. One lady has been waiting 3 years and another individual has been on the list for 2 years.

2. How many of you would be interested in a career or job in manufacturing, healthcare, human services, and or education? Do you currently work in any of these settings?

(a) Sales

(b) Special Education

(c) Lawyer – but because of the language barrier and lost 3 years waiting to take English classes at RACC, it's taking longer.

3. Have you ever had a problem at work because you didn't have the right English and math skills for the assigned job? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation?

(a) Yes because some machines the instructions are in English and if you don't understand the language, you will have a problem operating the machine.

(b) One participant mentioned that it would be a lot better if both employee and employer could be able to understand one another and mentioned that employee should also learn Spanish. This would benefit the company because they could lose a good worker because of a language barrier.

(c) Employer should be able to learn the language to understand the employee and what is being said.

(d) The company environment has risen with Spanish speaking employees.

(e) Yes, can lose the opportunity to a raise and/or promotion because of lack of English.

(f) Feel like not valued at work because don't speak English.

(g) Employers are not investing in their Employees so that this problem is solved.

4. Do you think that being fully able to read instructions at work even detailed ones in English will make a difference in workplace experience? If anyone says yes, ask for explanation?

Yes

(a) The thought of not knowing what you are signing is scary.

(b) Operating a machine that has instructions in English can't be done.