



Nova Scotia School  
for **Adult Learning**  
*Success starts here!*

# GO NSSAL!

SUCCESS STORIES IN ADULT EDUCATION



NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL FOR ADULT LEARNING (NSSAL)



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## INTRODUCTION

*This report is a celebration of the achievements of thousands of adults who have improved their literacy, numeracy, and other essential skills through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL). It is also a celebration of the many dedicated educators and literacy advocates across the province who have built a network of community-based programs under the umbrella of NSSAL. And finally, it is a call to all Nova Scotians to continue to make adult literacy and skills development a priority throughout the province. The report summarizes information from the first NSSAL Graduate Follow-Up Survey, conducted in 2007, and includes next steps recommended by Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Workforce Development.*

### **LITERACY AND NUMERACY ARE ESSENTIAL**

**SKILLS** that affect every aspect of our lives, from managing money and helping children with homework, to succeeding at work. But many adult Nova Scotians face literacy challenges every day. The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), conducted in 2003, identified that over 240,000 Nova Scotians, aged 16 to 65, do not have the literacy skills to fully participate in a knowledge-based economy.

The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) was formed in 2001 to coordinate adult learning programs across the province, ranging from basic literacy to high school completion. Since 2001, there have been over 30,000 enrollments in NSSAL-funded programs, and more than 2,800 adults have earned their high school diploma.

NSSAL is administered through the Adult Education Division, Skills and Learning

Branch, of the Department of Labour and Workforce Development. Funding is provided through the provincial Department of Labour and Workforce Development, the provincial Department of Community Services, and the federal government through Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC).

NSSAL contributes to the social and economic development of the province by ensuring that more adults have the necessary skills, knowledge and credentials to succeed at home, in the community, and in the workforce. It has a vital role in helping to build The New Nova Scotia (see <http://www.gov.ns.ca/2020/>).

*"I went back to school to better educate myself and secure a job. This program has given me a second chance."*

# Achievements

## WHAT DOES NSSAL DO?

**NSSAL PROVIDES** program funding, curriculum development, program guidelines, student resources, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), practitioner support and training, and adult education research to organizations that deliver programs directly

to adults. Its partners include community learning organizations, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Université Sainte-Anne, and most regional school boards. To receive funding, NSSAL partners must meet guidelines for hours of instruction and instructor qualifications.

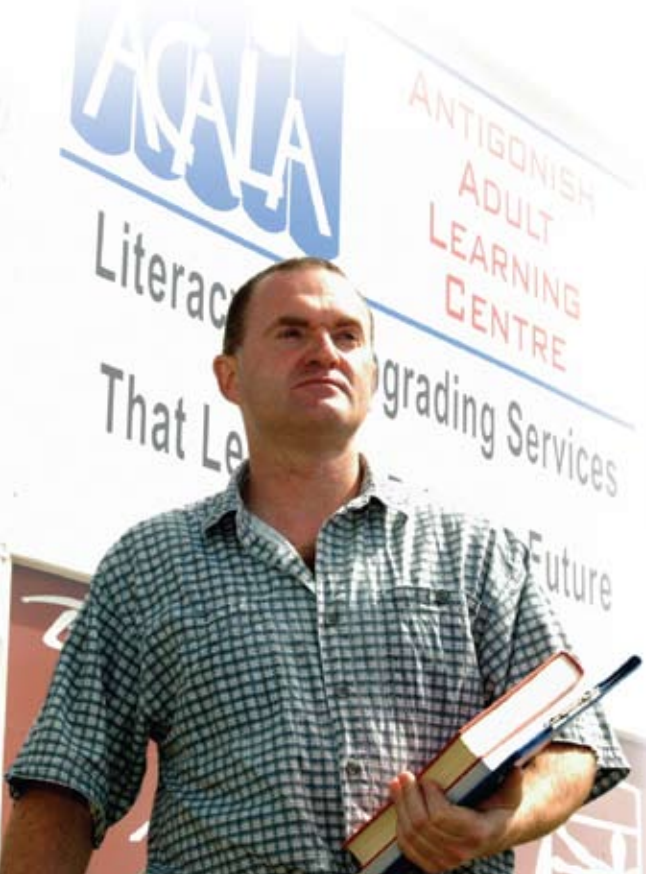
Through NSSAL, over 140 programs are offered across the province each year, in both English and French. NSSAL programs are tuition-free for adults who are 19 years or older, have been out of school for one year or more, and have not earned a high school diploma recognized by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. See the map on the last page for more details on NSSAL programs across the province.

NSSAL has the following goals:

- contribute to the development of a skilled, competitive workforce, healthy communities, and a vibrant economy

- provide a range of programs for adults who are returning to learning
- ensure that adult learning and credentials are recognized by employers, colleges, and universities
- support families through creative programming for parents and children
- support African-Canadian, Mi'kmaw, Acadian and other communities and individuals, and learners with special needs
- provide professional development and resources for those who deliver training in literacy and essential skills
- respond to trends and practices in labour market programs, as well as develop related policies for the provincial government.

*“All my life, I regretted the fact that I hadn't finished Grade 12. At age 52, I decided to accomplish my dream. It's an immense personal satisfaction.”*



# Learning Options

## WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM OPTIONS?

**NSSAL OFFERS** practical and flexible learning options for adults and aims to remove some of the barriers that adults face when returning to learning. Adults can choose the options

that help them achieve their personal goals, which may include one or more of the following:

- improving literacy, math, problem solving, critical thinking, and teamwork skills
- entering the workforce or advancing at work
- preparing for post-secondary studies.

Adults who need formal credentials for work or post-secondary studies have two options:

- the General Education Development (GED) High School Equivalency Certificate—an international high school equivalency testing program for adults
- the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults (NSHSGDA).



## PATHS TO A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION DIPLOMA FOR ADULTS OR GED EQUIVALENT

### • **Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults**

• Students complete 12 credits through one or more of the following programs:

- the Adult Learning Program (ALP)
- Formation générale des adultes (FGA)
- Grades 11 and 12 of the Public School Program (PSP).

• Students may also get credits for prior learning.

### • **GED High School Equivalency Certificate**

• Students complete five tests in writing, reading, social studies, science, and mathematics. GED does not require the student to complete course work; it only requires the student to write the tests and pay the test fees. A GED certificate is recognized by many employers but may not be recognized as a high school certificate by universities and other post-secondary institutions.

# tions

## **Adult Learning Program (ALP) and Formation générale des adultes (FGA)**

NSSAL delivers the Adult Learning Program (ALP) through Nova Scotia Community College and community learning organizations. The Adult Learning Program includes four levels of courses offered in English, ranging from basic literacy to high school graduation. The French-language equivalent is Formation générale des adultes (FGA), which delivers three levels of courses through Université Sainte-Anne and Équipe d'alphabétisation Nouvelle-Écosse.

## **Public School Program (PSP)**

The Public School Program (PSP) is delivered mainly through regional school boards. The PSP defines the curriculum and other requirements of Nova Scotia's public education system,

from grades Primary to 12. Most regional school boards offer programs to enable adults to complete the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults. Students can obtain the required 12 credits through adult high schools or correspondence courses.

### LEVELS AND PURPOSES OF COURSES AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH

	ALP (English)	FGA (French)
<b>Levels I &amp; II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To develop and apply essential literacy and mathematics skills</li></ul>	✓	✓
<b>Level III</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To improve a variety of skills before students enter into Level IV; and/or</li><li>To improve literacy and essential skills in order to help students manage changes in their life or work</li></ul>	✓	✓
<b>Level IV</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To meet the requirements of the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults</li></ul>	✓	✓



# THE NSSAL GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

# Survey

## THE FIRST NSSAL GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP

**SURVEY** was completed in 2007. Over 882 NSSAL graduates from 2001 to 2006 participated in an extensive telephone survey conducted by Market Quest. Graduates were asked 58 questions about their background, their satisfaction with the program, and how the program affected their work and personal lives.

The survey results confirmed what our partners and students have been telling us: NSSAL works. The students are succeeding at school and in the labour force. NSSAL is having a powerful, positive effect on the labour market in Nova Scotia.

*Before the program,  
45 percent of graduates  
had been out of school  
for 15 years.*

## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS\*

**99%** of graduates were satisfied with their overall program experience

**99%** of graduates would recommend the program to someone who was thinking about returning to school to get a high school diploma

**96%** of graduates who pursued further studies felt well prepared for their studies

**86%** of graduates are either working or looking for work

\* Based on the number of respondents, these results are estimated to be accurate within 2.5 percentage points, 95 percent of the time.





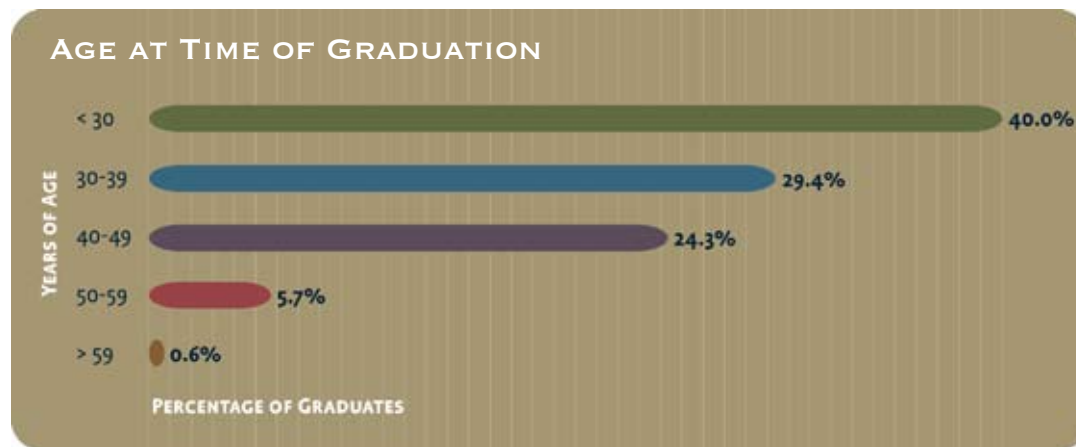
# Results

## WHO ARE THE NSSAL GRADUATES?

**ALMOST 70 PERCENT OF GRADUATES** were under 40 years of age when they graduated. Most graduates (72 percent) were women. Before they entered the program, 45 percent of graduates had been out of school for at least 15 years.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ADULT LEARNING?

**IT IS CLEAR FROM THE SURVEY RESPONSES** that NSSAL programs are successful in many ways. Graduates reported an increase in self-confidence, health and well-being, and positive indirect benefits to their children. They also reported higher rates of employment and lower reliance on government assistance.



*The number of clients receiving financial assistance after graduation was half the number who received assistance when they started the program.*

*At graduation, almost 70 percent of graduates were under 40.*

# Impact

## Impact on employment and social assistance

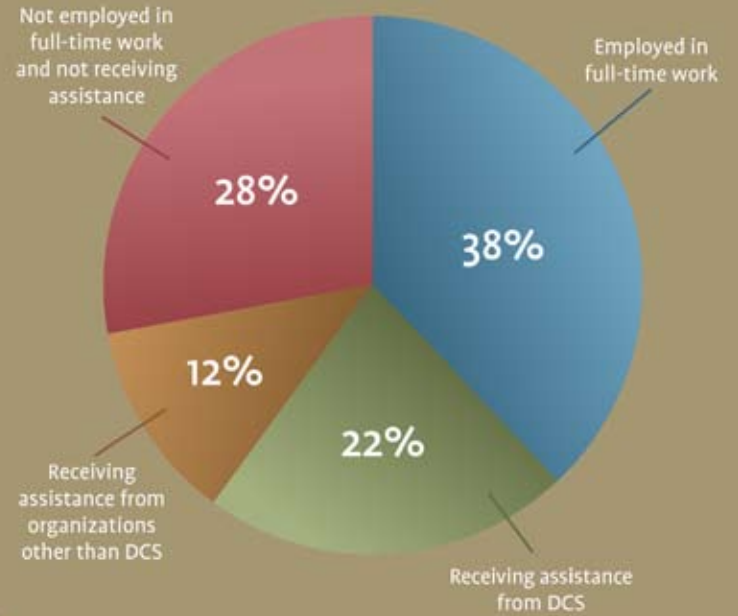
Before beginning a NSSAL program, only 38 percent of the respondents had full-time work. However, after they completed the program, the number of people reporting full-time employment rose by 15 percentage

points to a high of 53 percent.

Note: The 28 percent of respondents not employed in full-time work and not receiving assistance includes

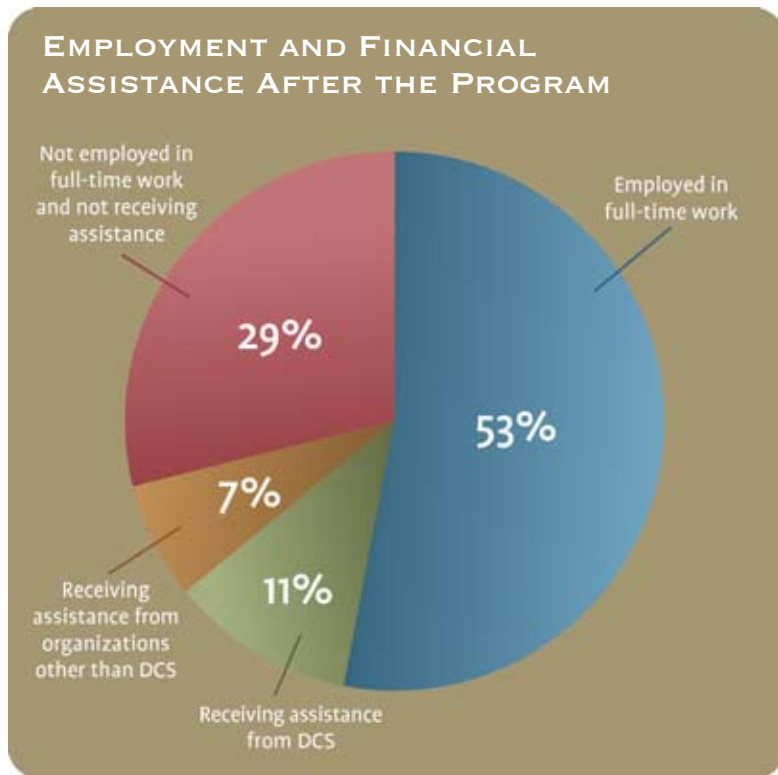
respondents employed in part-time and seasonal work.

## EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BEFORE THE PROGRAM



The results were just as positive for those receiving government assistance. Before the program, 22 percent of graduates were receiving assistance from the provincial Department of Community Services (DCS),

and 12 percent were receiving assistance from other organizations. At the end of the program, the number of clients receiving assistance from DCS or other organizations was cut in half.



**Impact on personal life**

*Ninety-nine percent of graduates were satisfied with their experience during the NSSAL program.*

Our partners—the community learning organizations, adult high schools, Nova Scotia Community College, and Université Sainte-Anne—all deserve recognition. Survey respondents stated that their success is a direct result of the dedication of staff.

Graduates reported that NSSAL had improved their lives in a number of ways, including the following:

- self-confidence (94.6 percent)
- hope for the future (93.8 percent)
- ability to pursue further studies (93.7 percent)
- home life (77.7 percent)
- ability to find work (75.1 percent)
- health and well-being (69.6 percent)
- financial situation (62.9 percent).

*Eighty-eight percent of graduates said that earning their high school diploma had a positive impact on their children.*

Over half of the graduates reported having children under 18 years of age. Of those respondents, 88 percent reported that their success in earning a high school diploma had a positive impact on their children. This positive impact was expressed in many ways, including the following:

- Earning a high school diploma encourages children to do the same.
- The graduate is financially better off, has a better job, and can spend more time with children.
- The graduate can now help their children with their studies.

- Children are proud of their parent for earning a high school diploma.
- Children see how important education really is.
- Earning a high school diploma has set a good example. The parent is a good role model.

*“Completing the adult learning program at NSCC has been a phenomenal opportunity for me. Everyone sees the changes in my confidence and self-respect. I stand up now for what I think and believe.”*

# Lives

## Impact on Nova Scotia's labour force

Without a doubt, NSSAL programs have an impact on people's lives. The survey results also provided strong evidence that NSSAL programs are having a positive impact on Nova Scotia's labour force—increasing the number of people who are employed or actively looking for work. Almost 86 percent of survey respondents reported being in the labour force after completing their high school diploma. Of those in the labour force (those who were working or actively seeking work), 91.4 percent reported they were employed.

Of the 14 percent not in the labour force:

- 35.5 percent reported that they were attending school
- 26.6 percent reported family/personal obligations
- 15.3 percent reported a disability.

According to the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS), the majority of new job openings in Nova Scotia between now and

2013 will be in three occupational groupings: health care and social assistance, sales and service, and administrative and support roles. The NSSAL graduate survey shows that graduates are filling jobs in those areas. For example:

- 24.9 percent work in health care and social assistance
- 22 percent work in sales and service, including:
  - 12 percent in retail trade
  - 10 percent in accommodation and food services
- 9.5 percent work in administrative and support roles
- 7.7 percent work in construction.

*Over 85 percent of survey respondents reported being in the labour force after completing their high school diploma.*



# Post-secondary

## WHAT POST-SECONDARY STUDIES ARE NSSAL GRADUATES CHOOSING?

**APPROXIMATELY 65 PERCENT** of respondents went on to other post-secondary programs, with the majority continuing their studies at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). An additional 21 percent plan to take further studies.

A high number of NSSAL graduates chose programs in health and related technologies; commerce, management and business administration; and applied science technologies and the trades. This suggests that graduates are pursuing work in areas where workers will be most needed in the next few years, based on COPS labour forecasts.

Of the 65 percent of graduates who have pursued further studies:

- 81 percent began these studies within six months after graduating with their high school diploma.
- 91.4 percent reported completing or still working towards completing their program. Only 8.6 percent reported not completing their post-secondary program.

The post-secondary completion rate of 91.4 percent for NSSAL graduates is higher than the provincial average of 79 percent for graduates of the Public School Program. (See the *2006 Follow-Up Survey of 1998 Nova Scotia High School Graduates: Report on Findings—September 2007*.)

NSSAL graduates chose the following types of post-secondary studies:

- 72 percent pursued studies at NSCC.
- 11 percent pursued studies at university.
- 11 percent pursued studies at private colleges.
- 4 percent pursued studies at other organizations or institutions.
- 3 percent pursued training at their workplace.
- 1 percent pursued studies through an apprenticeship program or placement.
- 1 percent pursued studies at other community colleges.



# Studies



# Moving

NEXT STEPS Call 1-877-90-NSSAL for more information



## NEXT STEPS

**A SKILLED AND EDUCATED WORKFORCE** is essential for the economic prosperity of The New Nova Scotia and for the well-being of all Nova Scotians. That is why the provincial government has made Educating to Compete one of its five priorities for 2008–09.

The creation of the Department of Labour and Workforce Development in 2008 signaled the government's commitment to strengthen workplaces and build a competitive workforce. The department's Skills and Learning Branch is responsible for advancing the province's vision of "a world-class workforce ready to meet the demands of today and the promise of tomorrow." The branch works collaboratively with partners in government, industry, labour, business, education, and the community to design, deliver and evaluate policies, programs and services.

As we move forward, the Skills and Learning Branch—together with literacy partners—will formalize a provincial action plan for literacy and skill development. This action plan will build on the impressive advances that NSSAL has made in adult education since 2001, and will address challenges that have been identified by our partners and learners.

We will expand programs to reach target populations, identify and provide learner supports (such as assistive technology), and explore flexible learning options for rural communities. As well, to better respond to Nova Scotia's labour market needs, we will continue to work on the recognition and assessment of prior learning for Nova Scotians and for immigrants wishing to live and work in our province.

We know Nova Scotians face challenges due to migration, an aging workforce, and the changing economy. We have learned that education empowers individuals and communities to thrive in an ever-changing world. NSSAL's innovative, responsive programming is a key ingredient to the ongoing success of adult education in Nova Scotia.

*"Returning to school has been a thrilling experience. It's an opportunity for a great future and it has transformed my life."*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who can take a NSSAL program?

NSSAL programs are open to adults who are 19 years or older, have been out of school for one year or more, and have not earned a high school diploma.

## What does NSSAL offer?

NSSAL offers more than 140 tuition-free adult learning programs across the province, ranging from basic literacy to high school

completion, in both English and French. The focus is on equipping adults with literacy and essential skills for learning.

## What do you mean by “essential skills”?

Essential skills are the skills needed to learn all other skills at work and in daily life. The Government of Canada has identified nine essential skills: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, and computer use.

## Where are the programs offered?

NSSAL programs are offered through community learning organizations, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Université Sainte-Anne, and most

regional school boards. NSSAL does not have its own campus or teaching staff.

Its role is to work with partners to meet the

needs of adult learners right in their own communities.

## Is the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults as good as a regular high school diploma? Will employers recognize it?

Yes, the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults is equivalent to the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma.

## Can I use my NSSAL credits to get into college, apprenticeship training, or other post-secondary programs?

Yes, but it is important to check with the registrar of the post-secondary program to ensure that you have taken the specific courses you need for the program that interests you.

## How can I find out more?

Call us at 1-877-go-NSSAL (1-877-466-7725) or visit [www.goNSSAL.ca](http://www.goNSSAL.ca).





CONTACT

# Information

**Telephone**

1-877-go-NSSAL  
(1-877-466-7725)

**Website**

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Labour and  
Workforce Development



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