

## Successful Oakland Adult Education Student an Example for Us All

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**"We must close the equity gap for immigrants, refugees, returning citizens, and all adults with disabilities." – Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier**

In an Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education [blog post](#) titled *Closing the Equity Gap* former Assistant Secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Brenda Dann-Meissier, mentions former Oakland Adult Education student [Rigoberto Alvarado](#) as an example of how "employment-focused literacy and numeracy, as well as job skills are critical to the prosperity and well-being of individuals." Alvarado is one of nearly two-hundred successful students whose stories are told at OTAN's [Adult Education Students Succeed Web site](#).

Dr. Dann-Messier writes, "Rigoberto Alvarado left El Salvador in 1991 in search of a better life in the United States. He needed English and a job. With the help of friends and family, he found an English class at the Neighborhood Centers' [Oakland Adult and Career Education](#). He started learning English. He found a job he liked in the hospitality industry. But he quickly realized he needed more skills in order to advance, so he returned to Neighborhood Centers to learn about computers and computer applications. Through hard work and dedication to his education, Rigoberto advanced through the ranks to become banquet manager at the Waterfront Hotel in Jack London Square. He now hires and supervises many employees, manages costs and inventories, and strives to create a positive employee work environment. Rigoberto put himself on the path to the middle class."

"One third of the 36 million adults with low skills in our country are immigrants or refugees like Rigoberto but they have not yet had the opportunities he has had," writes Dr. Dann-Messier. "Our current programs can only offer English language learning opportunities to about 678,000 adult English learners per year. Unless we create additional opportunities for them, these twelve million adults will have a harder time finding a well-paying job than their higher skilled peers."

Dann-Messier launched the national engagement process that resulted in [Making Skills Everyone's Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the United States](#) which was [released](#) on February 24. She travelled across the country gathering input and talking directly to adult learners who told her, "that they are ready to take advantage of the opportunities to improve their skills."

The result is a challenge to educators "to work more closely with employers to prepare students for in-demand jobs with advancement potential,"

Dr. Dann-Messier's full post can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/ovae/2015/03/02/closing-the-equity-gap/>. More student success stories are available on the [Adult Education Students Succeed Web site](#). Former adult education students may also be [nominated](#) to be added to the site.



Rigoberto Alvarado  
[Adult Education Students Succeed](#)