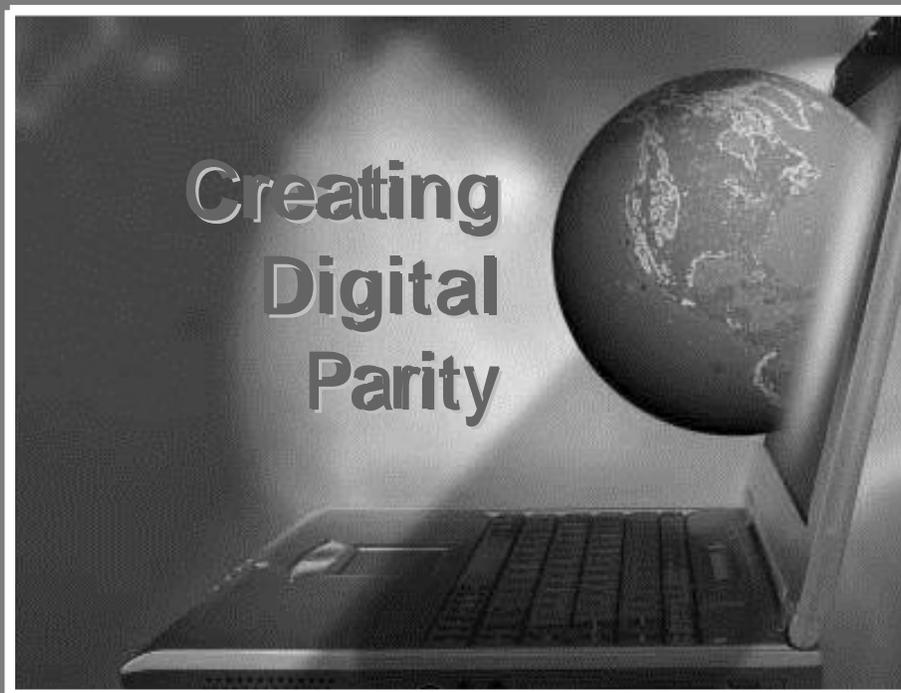


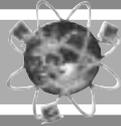
University Center for Academic and Workforce Development (UCAWD)

# **ATTAIN: Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking Project**



## **Implementation and Impact Study Phase I Evaluation Report**

Measurement Incorporated  
December 2008



ATTAIN

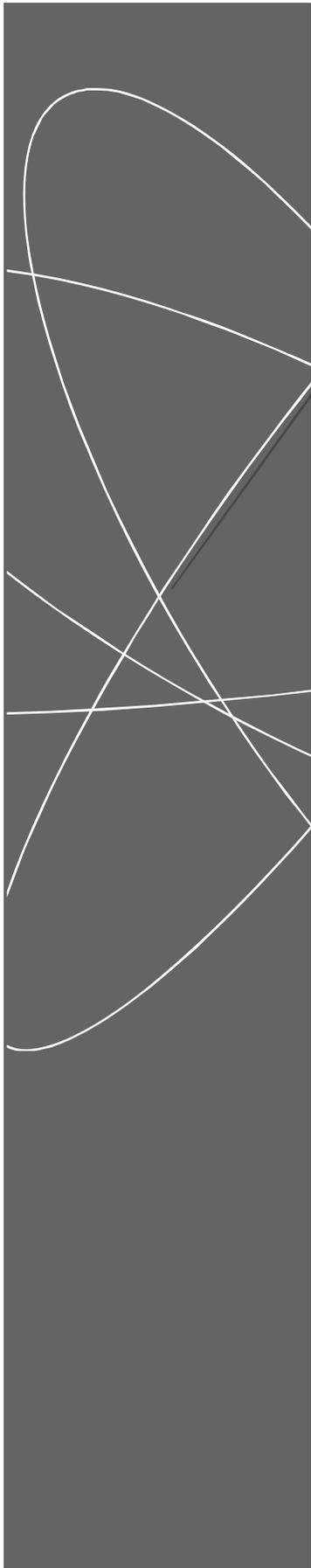


**Implementation and Impact Study  
Phase I Evaluation Report**

Measurement Incorporated  
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# Table of Contents

Report Highlights .....	<i>i</i>
Introduction.....	1
The New York State ATTAIN Initiative .....	2
Evaluation Methods .....	5
Study Approach .....	6
Phase I Key Questions .....	6
Phase I Evaluation Activities.....	7
Data Analysis .....	8
Key Findings .....	9
<i>Is the ATTAIN initiative reaching its intended audience?.....</i>	9
<i>What are the immediate benefits of ATTAIN? Are the benefits in line with users' goals?.....</i>	12
User Goals .....	13
Benefits by Goal Area.....	14
Attitudinal and Behavioral Benefits.....	17
Gains in Technology Skills--Before and After ATTAIN .....	18
<i>What is the "value added" of ATTAIN? .....</i>	20
<i>How is ATTAIN being used? To what extent is ATTAIN being integrated into existing programs and services?.....</i>	23
ATTAIN Lab Use .....	24
Integration with Existing Programs and Services.....	27
<i>What are the supports to ATTAIN implementation? .....</i>	32
Leadership and Support .....	32
Conclusion .....	34
Student Success Stories .....	36
Appendix: ISI Courseware Offerings .....	47



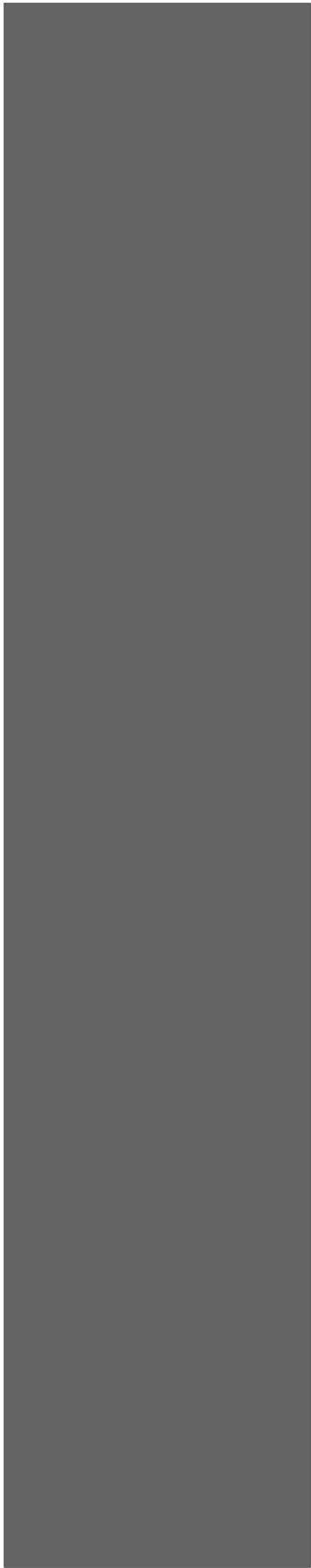
# Figures and Tables

## Figures

Figure 1:	ATTAIN Lab User Goals .....	13
Figure 2:	Benefits for ATTAIN Lab Users Working to Improve Computer Skills .....	14
Figure 3:	Benefits for ATTAIN Lab Users Working to Improve Basic Skills .....	15
Figure 4:	Benefits for ATTAIN Lab Users Working to Obtain GED .....	16
Figure 5:	Benefits for ATTAIN Lab Users Working to Improve Job Skills/Find Employment .....	16
Figure 6:	Attitudinal Benefits for ATTAIN Lab Users .....	17
Figure 7:	Gains in Technology Skills: Communication and Information Accessing (EOC ATTAIN Lab Users) .....	18
Figure 8:	Gains in Technology Skills: Communication and Information Accessing (CBO ATTAIN Lab Users) .....	19
Figure 9:	ATTAIN Lab Usage by Group .....	25
Figure 10:	Student/Client Use of ATTAIN Courseware .....	26
Figure 11:	Instructional Staff Use of ATTAIN with Their Students .....	29
Figure 12:	Professional Benefits of ATTAIN for Instructional Staff .....	30

## Tables

Table 1:	ATTAIN Lab Sites .....	3
Table 2:	ATTAIN Lab User Profile .....	10
Table 3:	Results of High Use - Low Use Group Comparisons Across All Outcome Categories .....	21



# Report Highlights

## Is the ATTAIN program reaching its intended audience?

ATTAIN Lab users represent disadvantaged New York State residents with respect to income level, employment status, and level of education.

## What are the immediate benefits of ATTAIN? Are the benefits in line with users' goals?

-  EOC and CBO clients use the ATTAIN Labs to reach a variety of different goals related to computer skills, job training, and continuing education.
-  The majority of lab users have benefitted from ATTAIN in ways that are directly aligned with their education and job training goals.
-  Among the ATTAIN Lab users who indicated that they were working to improve their computer skills, the vast majority have met that goal, and also reported newly found comfort with technology.
-  ATTAIN Lab users working to improve their basic skills report that, because of ATTAIN, they have made improvements in areas such as reading, writing, math, and English.
-  Among the many lab users working toward GED attainment, the vast majority have improved their basic skills, and report better chances of taking and passing the GED exam because of ATTAIN.
-  For lab users working to find new or better jobs, the majority report that ATTAIN has led to more job opportunities, and has afforded them new computer skills essential for employment.
-  ATTAIN Lab users have experienced attitudinal and behavioral benefits related to learning, technology, and personal empowerment as a result of participation.



ATTAIN Lab users significantly improved their ability to use technology for *communication* and *information accessing* during their time in the lab.



ATTAIN Lab users significantly improved their ability to use technology for *information processing* and *productivity*.

### **What is the “value added” of ATTAIN—does more time-on-task result in greater benefits for users?**



ATTAIN Lab users who spent more time in the lab experienced significantly greater benefits than those who spent less time in the lab.



The vast majority of ATTAIN Lab users would recommend the lab to others.

### **How is ATTAIN being used? To what extent is ATTAIN being integrated into existing programs and services?**



During 2007, nearly 10,000 users were enrolled in ATTAIN across 31 sites statewide.



ATTAIN Lab users are frequent users.



Most ATTAIN Lab users are enrolled in programs at their respective agencies, and use ATTAIN both during and outside of scheduled class time.



ATTAIN course offerings are well-aligned with users’ needs.



ATTAIN Sites have been successful at integrating the lab technology into their programs and services.



ATTAIN faculty/staff are “tech savvy”.

 Instructional faculty/staff use the ATTAIN Lab resources with their students in a variety of ways, such as to support individualized learning, conduct research, or to master skills taught in class.

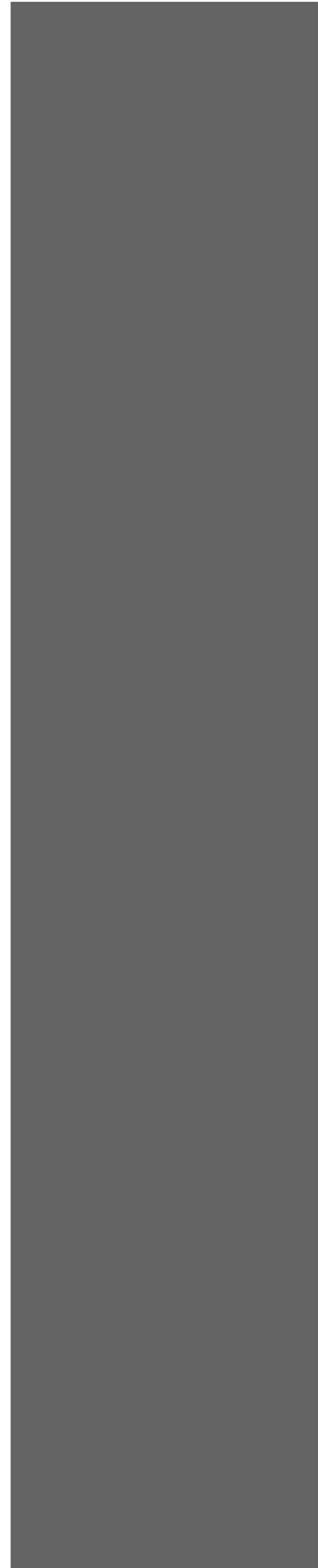
 Instructional faculty/staff have strengthened their professional practice as a result of ATTAIN.

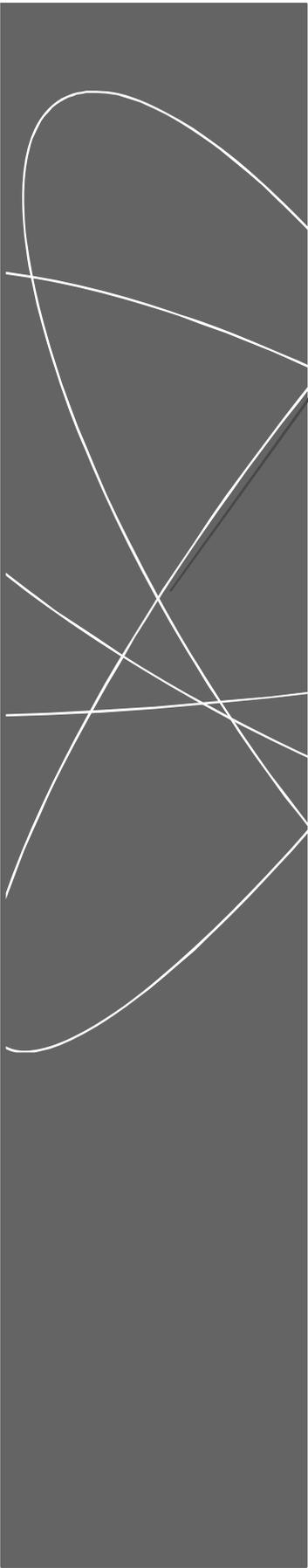
## **What are the supports to ATTAIN implementation?**

 The ATTAIN Initiative continues to operate under clear vision and guidance from program leaders, and with strong support from key groups.

 The ATTAIN Labs are well-maintained by ISI and technical support is timely and useful.

 In most cases, the ATTAIN Labs are supported by full time lab managers who are well-qualified for their positions.





# Introduction

Computer technology is considered an essential resource in education at all levels. Many believe it has the potential to enhance teaching and learning when integrated effectively into the classroom environment, both in terms of bringing greater efficiency to teachers' and students' work, and as a tool for skill building and problem solving.

Computers and computer skills are also essential in today's workplace; workers are expected to use computers to communicate electronically, track and analyze information, and produce documents, all while adapting to new technologies as they become available. These skills, considered an important component of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, are no longer a luxury but instead a requirement of employment in virtually any work environment. And, more than ever, the use of technology can influence and improve every day life via access to medical information, managing finances, and communicating with family and friends.

While technology plays a critical role in our lives, it is not surprising to learn that individuals with the lowest levels of education, lowest socioeconomic status, and those representing minority groups have historically had the least access to computers and the Internet. Consider these findings from the 2003 Census regarding Internet use:

-  44% of Americans with a high school diploma or GED use the Internet, compared to 85% of those with a Bachelor's degree.
-  Fewer than one in three (31%) Americans making \$15,000 per year use the Internet, compared to 72% of those making \$50,000-\$74,999 per year.

*"Program participants have increased their computer skills, job skills, and academic skills. Learning new skills in the ATTAIN Lab has increased the confidence of participants. As a result, many have obtained and retained employment. In addition, some have gone forward to increase their academic training by either enrolling in a GED course, vocational training, or college course."*

*-ATTAIN Lab Faculty/Staff*



Thirty-seven percent of Hispanics and 46% of Blacks use the Internet, compared to 65% of White Americans.

Consequently, individuals with limited access to and use of technology are not likely to develop essential 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, leaving them at a disadvantage when competing for jobs, and in reaping the other benefits technology affords.

## The New York State ATTAIN Initiative

The Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking Initiative (ATTAIN) has provided thousands of disadvantaged adult students in New York State access to state-of-the-art technology, high-speed internet access, computer skills training, and computer-based basic skills and vocational training software programs. The ATTAIN labs are the result of a joint effort between the State University of New York University Center for Academic and Workforce Development (UCAWD) and Instructional Systems, Inc. (ISI). The purpose of these computer labs is to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century skill needs of low-income adults residing in areas with limited access to technology. Through ATTAIN, participating adults will be able to compete more favorably for technology-dominated jobs that provide good wages and the potential for career advancement.

Since 2000, SUNY UCAWD and ISI has installed 37 ATTAIN labs throughout New York State, which are housed in SUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) and in a variety of community-based organizations (CBOs) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1  
ATTAIN LAB SITES

EOC Sites	CBO Sites
Bronx Educational Opportunity Center	Baden Street Settlement ATTAIN Center
Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center	Berry Houses ATTAIN Center (NYCHA)
Buffalo Educational Opportunity Center	Binghamton Carlisle Hills ATTAIN Center*
Capital District Educational Opportunity Center (Albany)	Broome County Urban League*
Capital District Educational Opportunity Center (Troy)	Buffalo Housing Authority ATTAIN Center
EOC of Westchester	Dr. Betty Shabazz Complex ATTAIN Center
Long Island Educational Opportunity Center (Brentwood)	Drew Hamilton Houses ATTAIN Center (NYCHA)*
Long Island Educational Opportunity Center (Hempstead)	Elmcor ATTAIN Center*
Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center	Far Rockaway Queens ATTAIN Center (Queens EOC Sattelite)
North Bronx Career Counseling and Outreach Center	Farragut Houses ATTAIN Center (NYCHA)
Queens Educational Opportunity Center	Gay Men's Health Crisis, Inc. (GMHC) ATTAIN Center
Rochester Educational Opportunity Center	Hector B. Basora SUNY ATTAIN Lab
Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center	Henry Street Settlement ATTAIN Center
	Jamaica-Community Adolescent Program, Inc. (J-Cap) ATTAIN Center
	Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violence ATTAIN Center
	Niagara Falls Housing Authority ATTAIN Center
	North Manhattan Coalition for Economic Development ATTAIN Center
	Ogdensburg Boys and Girls Club ATTAIN Center
	Perry ATTAIN Center
	Polo Grounds ATTAIN Center (NYCHA)
	Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library ATTAIN Center
	South Beach Community Center (NYCHA) *
	Sullivan County ATTAIN Center
	W.E.B. Du Bois High School ATTAIN Center

\*Site was more recently established and was therefore not targeted for the evaluation

The infrastructure and technical support for the ATTAIN initiative is provided by ISI, an instructional hardware and software company, that has delivered a specialized array of products and services to the project. ISI's services include the installation and maintenance of the hardware and software, upgrades, patches and security services; WAN/LAN services, web services such as individual web sites for each ATTAIN site and online technical support mechanisms; and staff training on all courseware, software, hardware, and data management systems.

ATTAIN Labs rely on a unique instructional model, ideally suited for the population they serve. Each lab features the following components.

-  Individualized, self-paced learning with frequent feedback mechanisms
-  More than 35 occupational, academic, and life skills courses (see Appendix for a list of ISI courses)
-  Interactive, multimedia tools
-  E-communication tools (email, message boards, discussion forums)
-  High-speed Internet access
-  Built-in management and participant tracking systems
-  Advanced LAN/WAN delivery option combining high speed LAN and server technologies with high speed WAN and Internet access

# Evaluation Methods

Previous evaluation studies of the ATTAIN initiative conducted by Measurement Incorporated Evaluation Services<sup>1</sup>, an independent research and evaluation firm, suggest that the initiative has been successful in making advanced computer technology available to disadvantaged residents across New York State. Furthermore, data collected from users and faculty/staff suggest that ATTAIN has been highly successful at meeting its goals to help users develop new job skills, improve their basic skills toward GED attainment or higher education, and to foster positive attitudes about learning. These promising findings have been consistently reported by both ATTAIN lab users and the faculty and staff who train and support them.

*“The greatest accomplishment of the ATTAIN Lab is that it helps our participants become more self sufficient. It helps them become more confident about their computer knowledge as well as makes them feel more independent in the work they know they can do. The participants have such a good understanding of the work that needs to be done, that I have noticed they try and help each other in overcoming their obstacles.”*

*-ATTAIN Lab Faculty/Staff*

The current evaluation study is comprised of an expansion of the ATTAIN implementation study to include all 31 sites, as well as an impact study to determine the “value added” of the program in the context of each agency’s existing programs and services. The impact study is comprised of two phases (over a 24 month time frame), the objectives of which are described below.



Phase I of the impact study sought to examine key implementation issues at all sites, including the number and type of students served, the type and extent of lab integration with existing services, and instructors’ use of ATTAIN in program delivery. Phase I also examined how current students are using the labs, users’ goals, and the early outcomes of ATTAIN use (i.e., increased job opportunities, gains in technology skills). Other outcomes such as the perceived value of ATTAIN, feelings of empowerment and improved quality of life were also examined. Finally,

<sup>1</sup>At the time of previous evaluations, Measurement Incorporated Evaluation Services was known as MAGI Educational Services.

Phase I laid the groundwork for the follow-up study that will continue into the coming year with lab users from all study sites.

- Phase II will focus on the “early outcomes” of ATTAIN. During this phase researchers will obtain follow-up data (primarily via telephone interviews) from students 8-12 months after leaving the ATTAIN program. The objective will be to learn about the benefits of ATTAIN such as job placement and/or advancement, changes in public assistance status, and college enrollment.

## Study Approach

Two evaluation designs will be used to address the study objectives:

- A Levels of Use (LoU) quasi-experimental design allowed researchers to approximate experimental and control groups based on time-on-task and duration of lab use. The LoU scale was constructed from key variables on the User Survey described below (Phase I and II).
- A longitudinal follow-up study will allow researchers to track participants’ progress toward attaining their goals 8-12 months after leaving the program (Phase II).

## Phase I Key Questions

Several key questions guided the first year of the study, which included:

- Is the ATTAIN program reaching its intended audience?
- What are the immediate benefits of ATTAIN? Are the benefits in line with users’ goals?
- What is the “value added” of ATTAIN?
- How is ATTAIN being used? To what extent is ATTAIN being integrated into existing programs and services?
- What are the supports to ATTAIN implementation?

## Phase I Evaluation Activities

Data for this report was collected from a variety of sources using multiple methods. Sources included agency administrators/lab managers, faculty/staff, and ATTAIN lab users. Study methods are described below.

- **ATTAIN Site Profile**—ATTAIN implementation varies from site to site, depending on the unique programs and services offered in different EOC and CBO settings. MI collected in-depth information from ATTAIN administrators/lab managers at all sites about the design and implementation of their programs. Twenty-three (23) sites completed a Site Profile detailing the make up of each lab in terms of student to faculty/staff ratio, the amount of time students use the lab, the ways they see clients utilizing the ATTAIN Lab resources, and lab support and challenges.
- **ATTAIN Faculty/Staff Survey**—All ATTAIN faculty/staff who use the labs with clients were asked to complete an online survey describing the integration of lab resources into their professional practice. Between December 2007 and February 2008 all faculty and staff were eligible to participate. A total of 116 surveys representing 24 sites were submitted. The surveys provided information about faculty/staff background and education, their experience working in the ATTAIN lab, the kinds of training specific to ATTAIN that they had completed, as well as program benefits and challenges.
- **ATTAIN User Survey**—This survey was administered online to ATTAIN lab users at or near the completion of their lab experience. The survey was designed to capture a description of the type and extent of lab use, personal and program goals, early outcomes, student demographics, and an assessment of technology skills before and after lab use. All students using the labs during the winter/spring of 2008 were eligible to participate in the study. A total of 632 surveys were submitted online from 27 ATTAIN lab sites.
- **ATTAIN User Profile**—ATTAIN lab managers and administrators at all sites were asked to identify three users at their site to complete an online user profile. These students were asked to compose a brief narrative describing their personal “success story” about their

ATTAIN experience. A total of 32 profiles were submitted online—selected profiles are presented at the end of this report.

- **ISI Data Manager Record Review**—MI worked with ISI staff to obtain program records on lab usage by program as recorded in the ISI Data Manager system. These data provided information about the extent of lab usage across all sites and programs.

## Data Analysis

The data collection activities resulted in rich descriptive information about the implementation of the ATTAIN labs, as well as immediate outcomes for lab users. In addition, inferences about user impact were possible through the use of a “quasi” experimental research design, which involved a comparison of high-use and low-use ATTAIN lab users. For each student a “Level of Use” (LoU) score was calculated, which took into account students’ reported time in the lab on a weekly basis over a 12 month period. Using inferential statistics (t-tests, chi square) comparisons were made between high-use and low-use groups to determine whether there were significant differences in their immediate outcomes related to lab use (i.e., greater skill development, more opportunities for jobs).

# Findings

## Is the ATTAIN program reaching its intended audience?

ATTAIN was designed to put technology into the hands of the New York State residents who need it most, whether for the development of new job skills, new/improved technology skills, or for improving basic skills for continuing education. Findings suggest that ATTAIN has been successful in meeting this goal by reaching those who are least likely to have access to technology of this kind and who, therefore, can benefit most.

As displayed on the following pages, ATTAIN serves New York State residents who face a variety of challenges—the typical ATTAIN user is a female person of color, unemployed, raising a family on less than \$10,000 in annual income. Furthermore, the majority of ATTAIN Lab users are receiving some form of financial assistance from the state (e.g., food stamps, Medicaid), and have a high school diploma or less. See Table 2 for the demographic characteristics of ATTAIN Lab users at both EOCs and CBO sites.

### ATTAIN Lab User Profile



ATTAIN lab users represent disadvantaged New York State residents with respect to income level, employment status, and level of education (Table 2)<sup>2</sup>.



The typical ATTAIN Lab user is a single female of color, supporting two children on less than \$10,000 annually.



ATTAIN Lab users are also typically unemployed and have a high school diploma or less.

<sup>2</sup>For each demographic category, the highest percentage is shaded to indicate the most common characteristics of ATTAIN users.

TABLE 2  
 ATTAIN LAB USER PROFILE  
 (N=632)

Demographic Category	EOC	CBO	All Sites
Gender			
Male	29%	39%	33%
Female	71%	61%	67%
Race/Ethnicity			
Black/African American	54%	39%	47%
Hispanic/Latino	22%	37%	28%
White, not Hispanic origin	10%	17%	13%
Asian	5%	4%	5%
Other	9%	3%	7%
Age			
Average Age	31	37	34
Age Range	18-82	18-77	18-82
Education Level			
High School Graduate/GED	29%	35%	32%
2 Years of College	5%	8%	6%
4 or More Years of College	3%	11%	7%
Employment Status			
Unemployed, seeking employment	59%	56%	58%
Unemployed, not seeking employment	5%	8%	6%
Employed part time	23%	15%	20%
Employed full time	10%	15%	13%
Marital Status			
Single	76%	66%	72%
Married	15%	22%	18%
Dependents Status			
Have Children at Home	51%	53%	52%
Number of Children at Home	2	2	2

TABLE 2 (CONTINUED)  
 ATTAIN LAB USER PROFILE  
 (N=632)

Demographic Category	EOC	CBO	All Sites
Public Assistance Status			
Not Receiving Public Assistance	45%	33%	40%
TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families)	15%	19%	17%
Food Stamps	37%	49%	42%
Medicaid	36%	49%	42%
Aid to the Blind or Disabled/SSI	10%	9%	9%
Other (e.g., Safety Net, daycare assistance)	7%	12%	9%
Income Level			
Less than \$10,000	60%	53%	57%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	17%	15%	16%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	6%	11%	9%
\$20,000 - \$24,999	6%	7%	6%
\$25,000 - \$29,999	5%	6%	5%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	3%	4%	3%
\$40,000 and Over	3%	4%	4%



## What are the immediate benefits of ATTAIN? Are the benefits in line with users' goals?

SUNY UCAWD and ISI share a vision for ATTAIN in which the underserved in our communities will improve their basic skills, technology skills, and job skills so that they are better equipped to succeed in today's marketplace. By this definition, ATTAIN can be judged as highly successful.

Because ATTAIN serves a variety of purposes for its users, an assessment of the benefits of the program should be viewed within that context—that is, *did lab users benefit in the ways that are in line with their goals?* The most popular goals reported by users included improving computer skills, working toward a GED, training for a new or better job, and preparing for continuing education. There were some differences in user goals with respect to where the ATTAIN Labs are situated—while the most popular goal at the CBO sites was to gain computer skills, EOC lab users were most often working to attain their GED.

Results suggest that the majority of ATTAIN Lab users benefitted in ways that were directly aligned with their goals. For example, of those who sought to improve their computer skills, 88% reported having done so, while 76% reported that they “feel better about technology” as a result of ATTAIN. Furthermore, 77% of lab users working to improve their basic skills reported having made gains in that area. Two in three users who were working to find a new or better job reported having more opportunities for jobs since participating in ATTAIN, while 76% had either gained new skills for their current job, or gained skills to do an entirely different job.

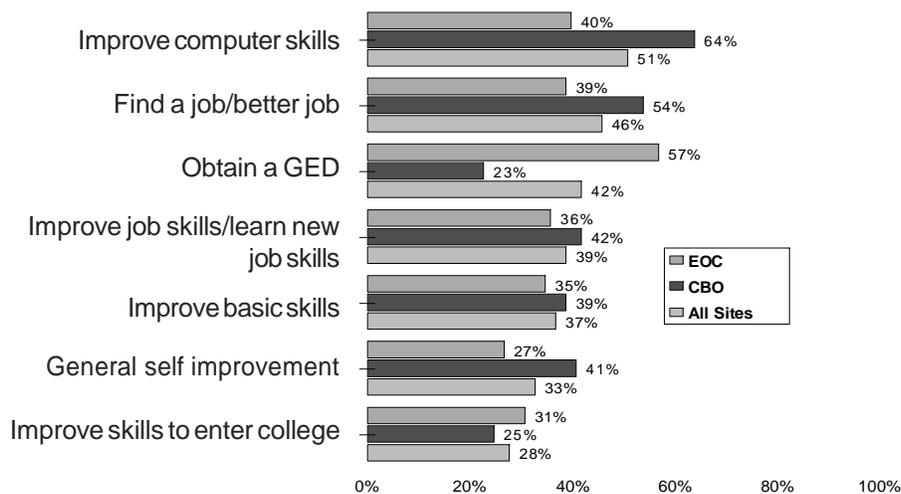
The study also examined program benefits that can be considered relevant for all students, such as attitudes about learning, a greater sense of pride, spending time more productively, and finally, gains in technology skills. As for technology skills, we reasoned that all lab users can benefit from increasing their potential to use technology, as these skills are essential at work, school, and in the job market. To assess technology skill gains, the User Survey contained a “post then pre” item, in which respondents rated themselves across individual skills *at the time of survey completion* (after having used the ATTAIN Lab—“post”), and *before using the ATTAIN Lab* (“pre”). Findings suggest that ATTAIN Lab usage resulted in statistically significant gains across essential skill areas such as communication, information gathering, information processing, and productivity.

## ATTAIN Lab User Goals



EOC and CBO clients use the ATTAIN Labs to reach a variety of different goals related to computer skills, job training, and continuing education (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1  
ATTAIN LAB USER GOALS  
(N=632)



The most frequently cited goal for CBO lab users was to improve their computer skills, as indicated by two out of three (64%) survey respondents. Forty percent of EOC ATTAIN Lab users also reported having this goal.



At EOC sites, clients are most frequently using the labs to work toward GED attainment, as indicated by more than half (57%) of respondents. At CBO sites, 23% of users held this goal as well.



ATTAIN lab users shared a number of other goals, which included:

- To find a better job (39% EOC, 54% CBO)
- To improve current job skills or to learn new job skills (36% EOC, 42% CBO)
- To improve basic skills (e.g., reading, math) (36% EOC, 39% CBO)
- To improve skills to enter college (31% EOC, 25% CBO)

## Benefits by Goal Area



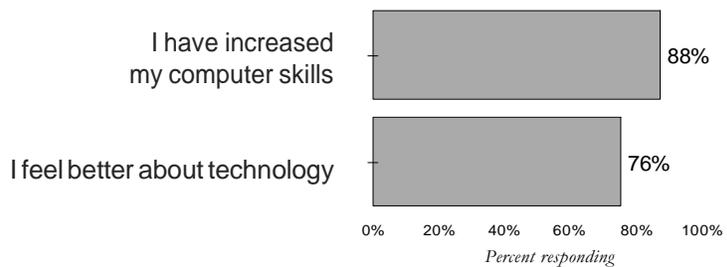
The majority of lab users have benefitted from ATTAIN in ways that are directly aligned with their education and job training goals.

### Goal Area: Computer Skills



Among the ATTAIN Lab users who indicated that they were working to improve their computer skills, the vast majority have met that goal, and also reported newly found comfort with technology (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2  
BENEFITS FOR ATTAIN LAB USERS  
WORKING TO IMPROVE COMPUTER SKILLS  
(N=306)



Among the ATTAIN Lab users who were working to improve their computer skills (n=306), the vast majority (88%) felt they had met this goal at the time of survey completion (see Figure 2).



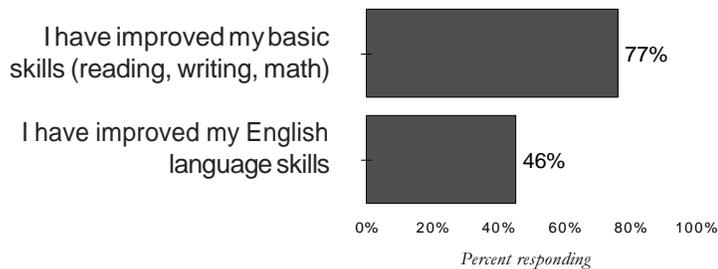
More than 3 out of 4 (76%) of these lab users also reported that they felt more comfortable about technology in general since using ATTAIN.

## Goal Area: Basic Skills



ATTAIN Lab users working to improve their basic skills report that, because of ATTAIN, they have made improvements in areas such as reading, writing, math, and English (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3  
BENEFITS FOR ATTAIN LAB USERS  
WORKING TO IMPROVE BASIC SKILLS  
(N=288)

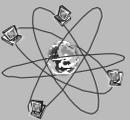


Among lab users working to improve their basic skills (n=288), more than three in four (77%) reported skill improvements in reading, writing, and/or math (see Figure 3).



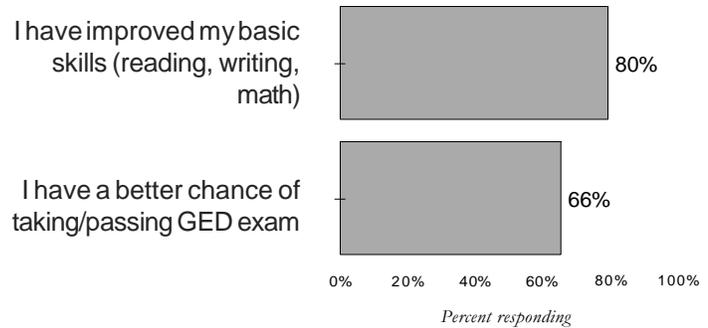
Almost half of these respondents (46%) reported improved English Language skills (note that this goal may not have applied to all respondents in this group).

## Goal Area: GED Attainment



Among the many lab users working toward GED attainment, the vast majority have improved their basic skills, and reported better chances of taking and passing the GED exam (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4  
 BENEFITS FOR ATTAIN LAB USERS  
 WORKING TO OBTAIN A GED  
 (N=253)

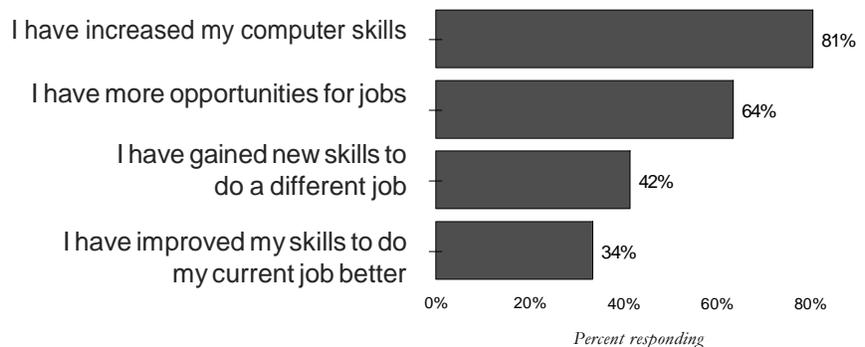


- Two out of three lab users working toward GED attainment (n=253) reported that, because of ATTAIN, they had a better chance of taking and/or passing the GED exam.
- The majority (80%) of this same group reported improvements in their basic skills—skills essential for GED attainment.

**Goal Area: New/Better Jobs**

For lab users working to find new or better jobs, the majority report that ATTAIN has led to more job opportunities, and has afforded them new computer skills essential for employment (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5  
 BENEFITS FOR ATTAIN LAB USERS  
 WORKING TO IMPROVE JOB SKILLS/FIND EMPLOYMENT  
 (N=336)



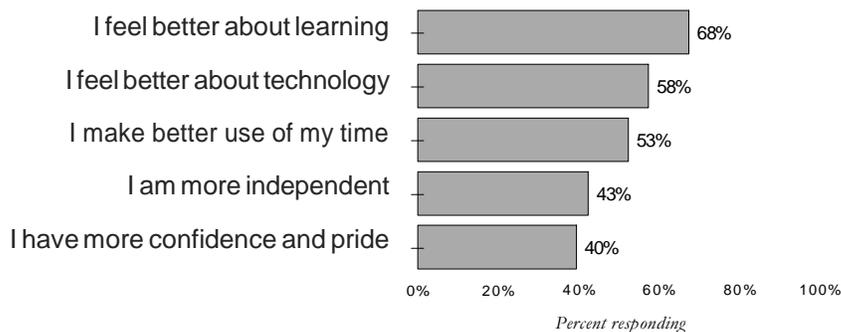
- ❁ Two in three (64%) lab users from this group (n=336) state that, because of ATTAIN, they now have more opportunities for jobs.
- ❁ The vast majority, 81%, also reported that they have increased their computer skills, which can also be considered, in many cases, an essential component of job training.
- ❁ Many lab users also reported having gained new skills to do an entirely different job (42%), or having improved their skills to do their current job better (34%).

## Attitudinal and Behavioral Benefits



ATTAIN Lab users have experienced attitudinal and behavioral benefits related to learning, technology, and personal empowerment as a result of participation (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6  
ATTITUDINAL BENEFITS FOR ATTAIN LAB USERS  
(N=632)



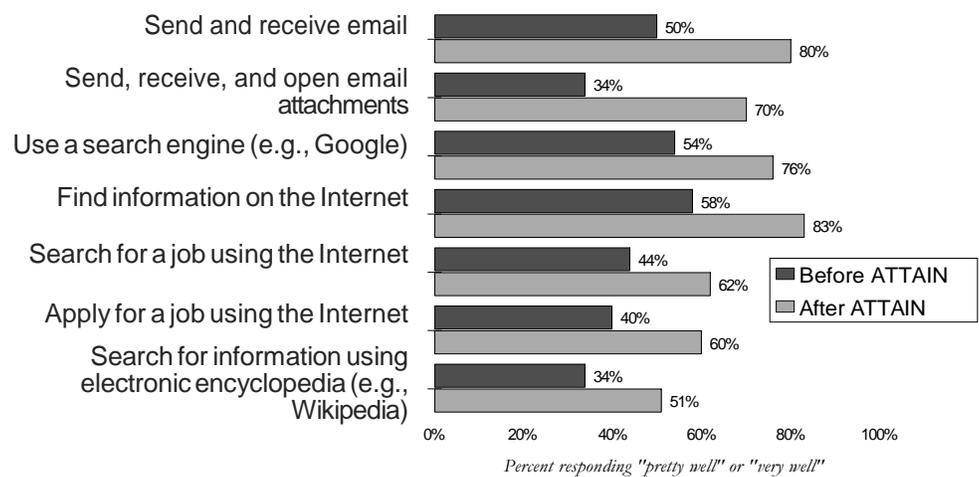
- ❁ More than two in three (68%) ATTAIN Lab users report that, because of ATTAIN, they feel better about learning.
- ❁ More than half (58%) of lab users say the project has allowed them to feel better about technology.
- ❁ Other benefits of ATTAIN include:
  - Making better use of time (53%)
  - A greater sense of independence (43%)
  - Increased confidence and pride (40%)

## Gains in Technology Skills



ATTAIN Lab users significantly improved their ability to use technology for communication and information accessing during their time in the lab (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7  
GAINS IN TECHNOLOGY SKILLS:  
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION ACCESSING



All gains were statistically significant at the .05 level



The greatest gains in communication and information accessing were related to lab users' email skills. Users made significant gains in their ability to send and receive email (50% of users reported being able to do this "pretty well" or "very well" before ATTAIN, compared to 80% after—a 30 percentage point gain). Similarly, users significantly increased their ability to use email functions such as sending, receiving, and opening attachments (36 percentage point gain).



Significant gains were also found in lab users' ability to utilize search engines such as Google (22 point gain), and to find information on the Internet (25 point gain).

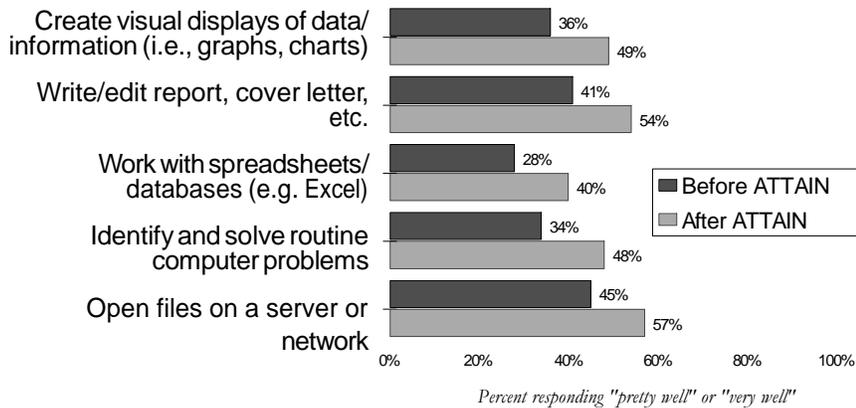


ATTAIN Lab users also gained skills to use the Internet to search for and apply for jobs—significant gains of 18 or more percentage points were reported in each case.



ATTAIN Lab users significantly improved their ability to use technology for information processing and productivity (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8  
GAINS IN TECHNOLOGY SKILLS:  
INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PRODUCTIVITY



All gains were statistically significant at the .05 level

- Students also made significant gains in their ability to use computers for information processing, and increased productivity. The greatest gains reported were in using computers to create visual displays of information (13% gain).
- Since spending time in the labs, ATTAIN users are also better able to produce and edit documents, such as reports and cover letters (14% gain), as well as working with data in the form of spreadsheets and/or databases (12 % gain).
- ATTAIN users have gained skills related to solving routine computer problems (14% gain).

## What is the “value added” of ATTAIN?

To better understand the extent to which the ATTAIN Initiative is associated with benefits for its users, we employed a quasi-experimental, levels of use (LoU) design; benefits were compared for those who spent more time in the lab with those who spent less time. For each student a LoU score was calculated, which took into account students’ reported time in the lab on a weekly basis for up to 12 months. Comparisons were made between high-use and low-use groups to determine whether there were significant differences in the benefits related to amount of lab use. By comparing outcomes for these two groups, we were able to draw inferences about the value-added of ATTAIN on important outcomes related to employment, basic skills, technology, continuing education, and attitudes.

Our findings revealed that those who used ATTAIN more during the 12-month timeframe reported significantly greater benefits than those who used ATTAIN less. In other words, more time-on-task using the ATTAIN resources was found to be associated with greater benefits for users. These findings speak to the “value added” of the ATTAIN Initiative in its capacity to assist users in meeting goals related to employment, job skills, continuing education, and other areas targeted by the initiative. These differences were found across all outcome categories we investigated, which are displayed in Table 3.



ATTAIN Lab users who spent more time in the lab experienced significantly greater benefits than those who spent less time in the lab (Table 3).

TABLE 3  
RESULTS OF HIGH USE – LOW USE GROUP COMPARISONS  
ACROSS ALL OUTCOME CATEGORIES

Outcome Category	Survey Items in Category	Statistical Significance	Effect Size
Employment/ Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Improved job skills (for current job)</li> <li>4 Learned new skills (for different job)</li> <li>4 Found a new or better job</li> <li>4 Got a job promotion</li> <li>4 Got a pay raise</li> <li>4 Have a better chance of getting off public assistance</li> <li>4 Have more opportunities for jobs</li> <li>4 Make better use of time</li> </ul>	Yes p < .001	.40
Basic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Improved basic skills (reading, writing, math)</li> <li>4 Improved English Language skills</li> <li>4 Have a better chance of taking/passing the GED exam</li> </ul>	Yes p < .05	.21
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Improved computer skills</li> <li>4 Feel better about technology</li> <li>4 Better able to keep up with technology in society</li> </ul>	Yes p < .001	.59
Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Obtained a GED</li> <li>4 Applied to college</li> <li>4 Enrolled in college</li> </ul>	Yes p < .005	.17
Affective/ Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Feel better about learning</li> <li>4 More independent</li> <li>4 More confidence and pride</li> </ul>	Yes p < .001	.52
Benefits Overall	All items listed above	Yes p < .001	.56

#### Statistical Significance and Effect Size

*Statistical Significance* suggests that the differences in benefits reported by the two groups—high use vs. low use—were not likely to have occurred by chance. For example, statistical significance at a “p” value of .05 means we can be 95% certain that differences between outcomes for the two groups were not due to chance alone (i.e., are attributable to the program).

*Effect Size* tells us about the *magnitude* of the difference. That is, *is the difference large enough to be educationally meaningful?* While interpretations vary, an effect size of .4 or above is considered educationally meaningful. Therefore, gains made by the high-use group in three of the categories above—employment/productivity, technology, and affective/behavior—can be considered meaningful.

-  As displayed in Table 3, more time in the lab was associated with significantly greater benefits across all outcome categories (e.g., employment/productivity, basic skills, etc.). The effect size was moderately large, at .56.
-  With regard to specific outcome categories, the greatest differences between groups were observed for technology-related benefits (e.g., improved computer skills, feeling better about technology). The effect size was moderate, at .59.
-  Significantly greater benefits were also reported by the high-use group for outcomes related to employment and productivity, such as having improved job skills or having more opportunities for jobs. The effect size was moderate, at .4
-  Statistically significant differences, in favor of the high use group, were also reported for outcomes related to basic skills (effect size = .21) and those related to continuing education (effect size = .17).



The vast majority of ATTAIN Lab users would recommend the lab to others.

#### Greatest Accomplishments...

*My biggest accomplishment using the ATTAIN Lab has been math problems, and writing and reading skills. I have improved a lot in using the computer since I started at the ATTAIN Lab. I am thankful and grateful to the entire staff at the EOC.*

*-ATTAIN Lab User*

-  As another measure of the value added of ATTAIN, lab users were asked whether they would recommend the lab to others. Almost every one of the survey respondents—97%—said they would.

## How is ATTAIN being used? To what extent is ATTAIN being integrated into existing programs and services?

The ATTAIN Labs were put into place both to ensure that the underserved across the State have access to the latest technology, as well as to enhance the various programs and services offered by each host agency. The current study sought to determine the ways in which the labs are being used by community residents and agency staff, and the extent to which the agencies have integrated ATTAIN into their programs and services.

All lab users are required to “enroll” in ATTAIN in order to begin using the labs on an individual basis, or as part of a class. Data supplied by ISI suggest that nearly 10,000 users were officially enrolled in ATTAIN as of December 2007. Survey findings suggest that those who are actively using the labs do so fairly regularly—many users (51%) visit the lab three or four times a week, while 86% do so at least once a week. As might be expected, lab users are often working in a group setting as part of a class group, or working independently; the majority (71%) of lab users are individuals who are enrolled in agency programs.

Findings also revealed that the ISI course offerings in the labs align well with the goals students have set for themselves—namely, increasing their technology skills, attaining a GED, and/or finding employment. Therefore, clients/students are most often using courseware such as GED preparatory programs, and the Employability Skills Series. And, by and large, host agencies have been able to integrate ATTAIN into most of their programs and services across areas such as technology training, GED prep and other academic programs, health services training programs such as Certified Nurse Assisting, and youth enrichment programs.

We also examined the extent to which the faculty and staff are adept at using technology. Survey results suggest that most are “tech savvy” and are comfortable using technology—the majority consider themselves to be at least *intermediate* users, meaning they are fluent with most common applications, and have a sense of competence when approaching new tasks using technology. This is an important finding, since the success of any technology initiative depends, at least in part, on the capability of its instructional staff.

Those who use ATTAIN with clients/students incorporate technology into their classrooms in a variety of ways, such as to support individualized learning, to have master skills taught in class, or to conduct research. Finally, the vast majority of instructional staff report that ATTAIN has served to enhance their professional practice, and has helped them to meet their instructional goals; the majority also feel they work more efficiently because of ATTAIN. Selected faculty/staff quotes describing their use of ATTAIN with students are presented on page 31.

## ATTAIN Lab Usage



During 2007, nearly 10,000 users were enrolled in ATTAIN across 31 sites statewide.

- As of December 2007, 9,687 community members were enrolled in ATTAIN.
- That same year, the total number of email accounts provided through the ATTAIN Initiative reached 12,239. Email accounts remain available to enrollees even after leaving the ATTAIN program.



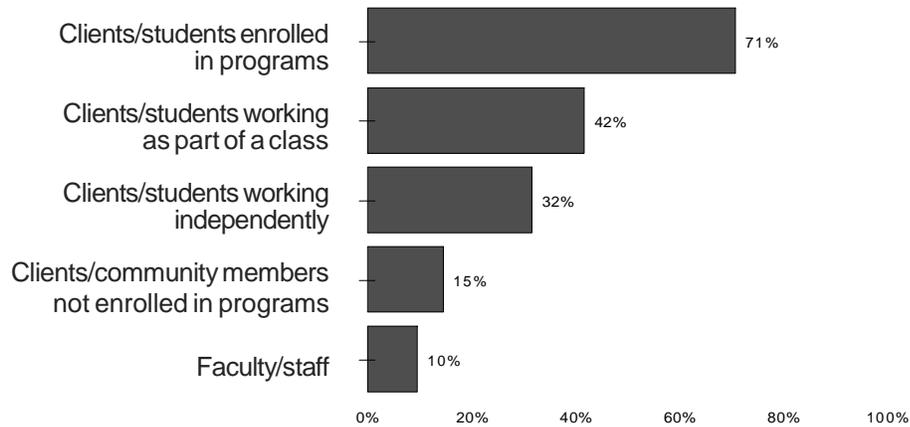
ATTAIN Lab users are frequent users.

- One in four (24%) students/clients use the lab on a daily basis, and at least half (51%) of all students/clients visit the lab three or four times a week.
- The vast majority (86%) of those who use the ATTAIN labs do so at least once a week.
- On average, students/clients report spending nine hours per week using the ATTAIN Lab.



Most ATTAIN Lab users are enrolled in programs at their respective agencies, and use ATTAIN both during and outside of scheduled class time (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9  
ATTAIN LAB USAGE BY GROUP  
(N=23 SITES)



- ⦿ Data gathered from Program Profiles suggests that the large majority (71%) of lab users are individuals enrolled in their agency's programs. Furthermore, 42% of those using the lab are typically doing so as a group, during class time.
- ⦿ About a third (32%) of lab users are usually students enrolled in programs who are working independently (outside of class time).
- ⦿ Approximately 15% of lab users are clients/community members who are not currently enrolled in programs at the host agency.

*ATTAIN helped me to improve on what I've learned in GED class. Also, I'm a bit more familiar with the computer.*

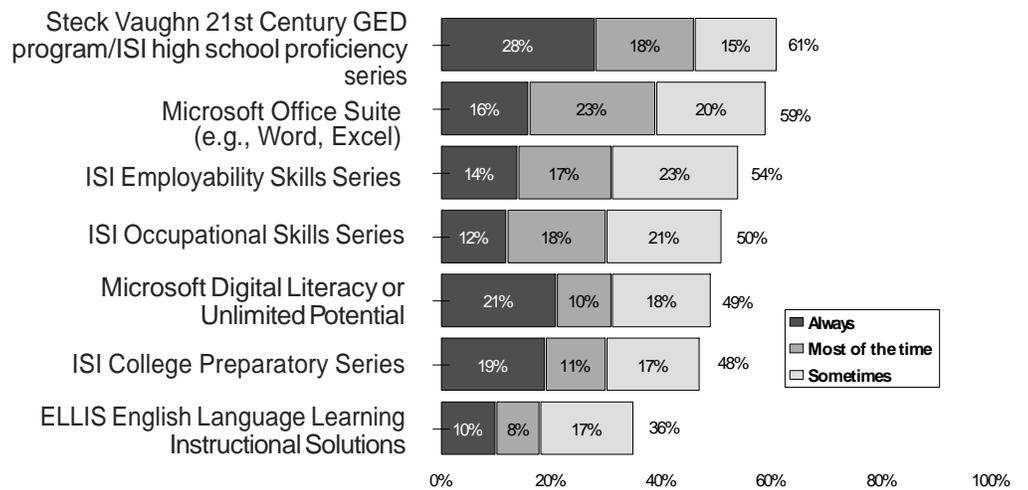
*-ATTAIN Lab User*



ATTAIN course offerings are well-aligned with users' needs (Figure 10).

- ATTAIN lab users' primary goals include improved computer skills (51%), new or better employment, and GED attainment. ATTAIN Lab course offerings are well aligned with these goals.

FIGURE 10  
STUDENT/CLIENT USE OF ATTAIN COURSEWARE  
(N=623)



- Almost two in three (61%) students/clients use the Steck Vaughn GED preparatory or high school level courseware. This courseware is also used most frequently (28% reported “always” using these programs).

- About one in two students use the following courseware offerings:

- ISI Employability Skills Series (54%)
- ISI Occupational Skills Series (50%)
- Microsoft Digital Literacy/Unlimited Potential (49%)
- ISI College Preparatory Series (48%)

- More than one in three (36%) students/clients use the ELLIS program to improve their English language skills.

## Integration with Existing Programs and Services



ATTAIN Sites have been successful at integrating the lab technology into their programs and services.

- ❁ The vast majority (91%) of agency faculty and staff report that the ATTAIN Lab resources are coordinated with existing programs and services to a *great* or *moderate* extent. This finding was echoed by 91% of those who responded to the Site Profile (primarily site administrators and lab managers).
  
- ❁ More specific information about lab integration was gathered through the Site Profile survey, which was submitted by 23 ATTAIN sites.
  - The majority (65%) of sites report that they have integrated ATTAIN into their technology training and digital literacy programs using courseware such as Microsoft Unlimited Potential and Microsoft Digital Literacy.
  
  - 57% of sites reported using the ATTAIN Lab in delivering their GED programs. Likewise, 57% of sites use ATTAIN in ISI health care services training programs that help students become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), Certified Nurse Assistants (CNA), medical assistants, dental assistants and surgical technicians.
  
  - 52% of sites reported having integrated the ATTAIN Lab resources into their job readiness, job search, and job training programs. These programs include college prep, Incumbent Worker and BRIDGE programs. Non-medical vocational training programs such as Cosmetology/Nail technician, Culinary Arts, Environmental Restoration, Childcare Assistant and Customer Service Representative and general office technology programs also utilize the ATTAIN lab. ATTAIN labs were also used for general education programs teaching reading and writing skills and/or ESL at 43% of sites.

- Youth activities are supported by the ATTAIN lab at EOC and CBO sites. Thirty-nine percent of sites reported using the labs in conjunction with academic services like after school tutoring and homework assistance, job skills training for teens, and for general recreational activities. Other programs and services that integrated ATTAIN were Life Skills and Skills Training (13% of sites reporting) and substance abuse services (9% of sites reporting).



ATTAIN faculty/staff are “tech savvy”.

- ⦿ Faculty and staff who use the ATTAIN Lab with students/clients are very comfortable with technology. Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents rated themselves as *intermediate* (41%), *advanced* (25%), or *expert* (12%) computer users (see sidebar for definitions).

- ⦿ Only 13% of faculty and staff who use the ATTAIN Labs consider themselves *new* or *novice* users with minimal technology skills.

Intermediate User: Fluent with most common applications and have a sense of competence when approaching new tasks using technology.

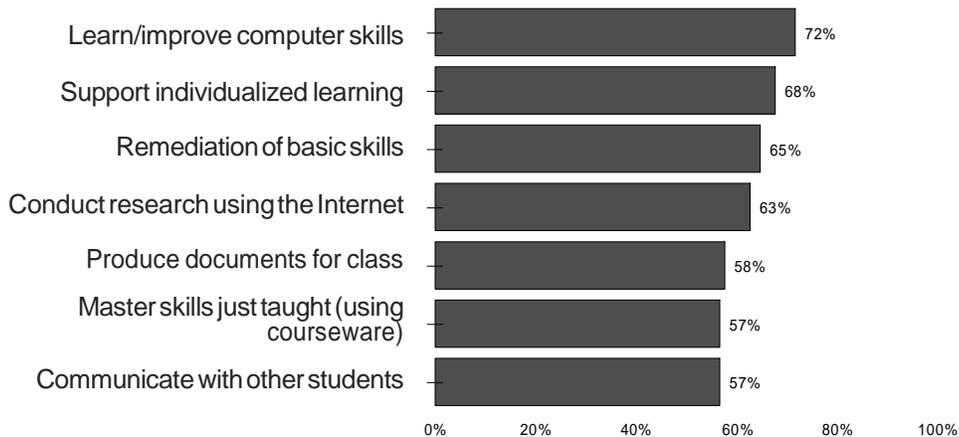
Advance User: Fluent with most common applications and skilled at troubleshooting problems with software and hardware.

Expert User: Often asked to teacher others technical skills  
Fluent with many specialized applications.



Instructional faculty/staff use the ATTAIN Lab resources with their students in a variety of ways, such as to support individualized learning, conduct research, or to master skills taught in class (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11  
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF USE OF ATTAIN WITH THEIR STUDENTS  
(N=69)



Faculty and staff who work with clients in an instructional capacity most frequently (72%) use ATTAIN to teach/improve computer skills.

More than two out of three faculty/staff use ATTAIN with students in the following ways:

- To support individualized learning (68%)
- To practice or learn basic skills (65%)
- To conduct online research (63%)

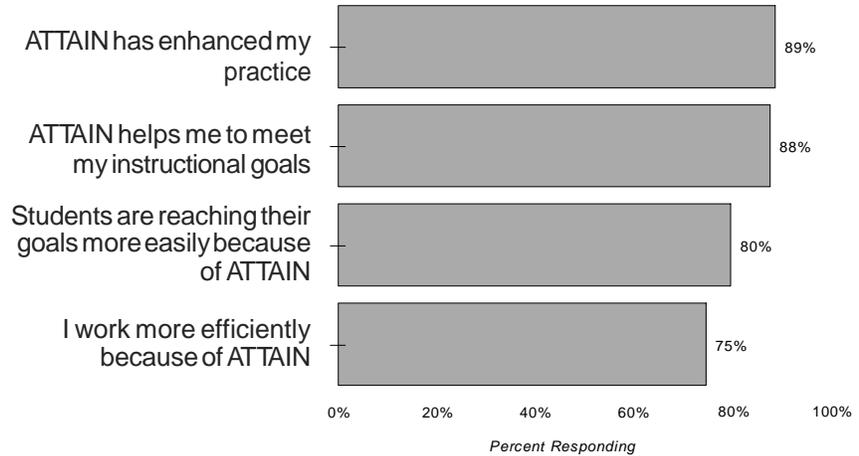
More than half of all instructors use ATTAIN with students for productivity, skill-building, and communication. For example,

- 58% have students produce word-processed documents for class
- 57% guide students to ATTAIN courseware so they can master skills taught in class, and
- 57% encourage their students to use the Lab resources as a communication tool with other students.



Instructional faculty/staff have strengthened their professional practice as a result of ATTAIN (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12  
PROFESSIONAL BENEFITS OF ATTAIN FOR INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF  
(N=69)



⚙ About 9 out of 10 (89%) faculty and staff who use ATTAIN for instructional purposes report that their professional practice has been enhanced by access to the lab resources.

⚙ The vast majority (88%) feel that ATTAIN helps them to meet their own instructional goals, and also helps their students more easily meet their own goals (80%).

⚙ The majority (75%) of faculty and staff believe they work more efficiently because of the availability of the ATTAIN Lab.

*"I expect my students to master the basics of word processing and internet use before they graduate. For some, the ATTAIN Lab is their first experience with computers. Learning how to navigate in this new world is very empowering for them. For others who already have computer skills, the lab software provides opportunities to practice and test themselves in reading, math, and grammar skills.*

*-ATTAIN Lab Faculty/Staff*

# Faculty/Staff Voices

## How do you use ATTAIN to meet your instructional goals?

-  *The Attain lab has helped me in many ways. My students use the ISI programs. I also incorporate the Internet for instructional use. The lab also supplies me with a variety of textbooks and worksheets for my students to use.*
-  *We currently work with computer curriculum, GED, refreshing Basic Skills, and Allied Health Career Exploration. The FYI financial classes are also utilizing the lab for research.*
-  *I have used the Life Skills software to conduct workshops with students in the areas of career counseling, job readiness, life skills, and self esteem.*
-  *The ATTAIN Lab is used to increase computer literacy and knowledge between a large variety of students. The students receive a variety of services to get them work ready.*
-  *After classroom GED instruction, students use the attain lab to practice what they have learned. This has enhanced learning and the GED scores have gone up. More people pass the GED.*
-  *I enroll all new Bridge enrollees in ISI and ensure that all Bridge Employment Services participants complete designated Customer Service modules as part of the required curriculum. I also monitor their scores on these modules to determine where they need to improve and advise appropriate staff in regard to deficiencies that may impact job referrals. In addition, students are allowed to explore other areas in ISI that may be of importance in their job quest.*
-  *I incorporate ISI modules, Digital Literacy and Steck Vaughn GED into my classes. I also use the Smart Board during classes and workshops.*
-  *This lab has been a great tool for me in order to accomplish my day to day teaching and supervisory activities. I have used the lab to better prepare many more of my clients and walk-in community residents.*

## What are the supports to ATTAIN implementation?

Strong leadership and support are key to the success of any educational initiative. Consistent with past evaluations of ATTAIN, findings suggest that the program operates under clear vision and guidance from program leaders. Faculty and staff agree that program leaders share a common vision for the program, and that they have a good sense of the community's needs with respect to technology access and education. Survey respondents also believe that ATTAIN is typically treated as a high priority among the other initiatives supported by their agencies.

Technical support for ATTAIN is largely provided by ISI, though the majority of faculty and staff reported no need for such support. Those who have required assistance with the hardware and/or software from ISI report that it has been timely and useful. The labs are further supported by full-time lab managers who are employed at each site. Lab managers are typically experienced in technology instruction as well as adult education, and are found to be well-qualified for the positions.

### Leadership and Support



The ATTAIN Initiative continues to operate under clear vision and guidance from program leaders, and with strong support from key groups.

- ❁ The vast majority of faculty and staff (93%) reported that program leaders share a common vision for ATTAIN, and almost all (98%) believe that that vision is in line with the community's technology needs.
- ❁ The majority (79%) also believe that program leaders provide clear and strong direction for the ATTAIN Lab operations.
- ❁ Fifty-four percent of faculty and staff believe ATTAIN is treated as a high or very high priority by their organizations' leadership and staff, relative to other programs and services. Another third (34%) report that ATTAIN is an average priority.



The ATTAIN Labs are well-maintained by ISI and technical support is timely and useful.

- Approximately 80% of faculty and staff report that, at least occasionally, they need technical support for the hardware or software in the labs. Faculty and staff also report that ISI is responsive to their needs, and that technical support is available when they need it.
- The majority of faculty and staff who receive support from ISI for hardware or software issues find the support very useful (82% hardware, 81% software).



In most cases, the ATTAIN Labs are supported by full time lab managers who are well-qualified for their positions.

- The vast majority (91%) of sites that submitted a Program Profile report having a full-time lab manager.
- On average, lab managers have five years of experience in a similar position and seven years experience in adult education.

*"[The lab manager] at my site helped my with my computer skills and I was able to use the nursing lessons to keep up with my nursing skills. I am now enrolled in GED and Certified Nurse Assisting programs."*

*-ATTAIN Lab User*

# Conclusion

The ATTAIN Initiative has continued to expand its reach to the underserved residents of New York State. As of 2007, almost 10,000 students had been enrolled in the program across 31 sites. The ATTAIN Labs are well-positioned within the EOCs and community based organizations where they are accessible to those who need them most—the typical ATTAIN users is an unemployed single parent with a high school education or less, living on less than \$10,000 a year.

This first phase of the study was designed to lay the groundwork for assessing the impact of ATTAIN on its users after they leave the lab. As such, the current study examined users' reasons for using ATTAIN, the ways in which they use the lab resources, and the perceived “immediate” benefits of lab use. We also investigated the ways in which instructors integrate ATTAIN into their professional practice, and the extent to which the initiative has been integrated into host agency programs and services. Finally, we examined the ways in which the initiative is supported by key stakeholders.

Findings revealed that ATTAIN lab users are most often working to improve their computer skills, find new or better jobs, improve their job skills, and/or obtain a GED. And, the majority of lab users made progress toward these goals. For example, 64% of lab users working to improve their job skills/find a new job reported that they have more opportunities for jobs because of ATTAIN. Similarly, 66% of lab users working to obtain a GED reported that, because of the initiative, they have a better chance of taking and passing the GED exam. Furthermore, a comparison of high-use and low-use groups revealed that more time in the lab resulted in significantly greater benefits in all outcome areas (i.e., employment/productivity, technology, GED/basic skills, affective/behavioral) suggesting that there is a “value added” to using ATTAIN—more ATTAIN equates to greater outcomes.

Computer skills are essential in virtually all types of employment; we therefore examined gains in self-reported computer skills for all survey respondents. On average, lab use resulted in significant gains in technology skills across all areas studied including information accessing, information processing, and productivity applications. The majority of lab users also reported a new-found comfort with technology through their ATTAIN experience.

Findings also suggest that the ATTAIn Lab resources are well-integrated into agency programs and services. The vast majority (91%) of agency faculty and staff report that the lab resources are coordinated with existing programs and services to a *great* or *moderate* extent. This finding was echoed by 91% of those who responded to the Site Profile (primarily site administrators and lab managers). More specifically, host agencies have been able to integrate ATTAIn into most of their programs and services across areas such as technology training, GED prep and other academic programs, health services training programs such as Certified Nurse Assisting, and youth enrichment programs.

The ATTAIn labs have benefitted faculty and staff as well as students. The majority of staff report that ATTAIn has enhanced their professional practice by bringing greater efficiency to their work, and allowing them to meet their instructional goals more easily. Staff who use ATTAIn with clients/students do so in a variety of ways, such as to support students' individualized learning, for the remediation of basic skills, and to conduct Internet research. And those who use the labs with client/students are reportedly very comfortable using technology, which bodes well for the continued success of the program.

Finally, study results suggest that the initiative operates under clear vision and guidance from program leaders, who have a good sense of the community's needs with respect to technology access and education. Survey respondents also report that ATTAIn is typically treated as a high priority among the other initiatives supported by their agencies. The labs are well maintained by ISI, which provides ongoing technical support for both hardware and software. The labs are further supported by full-time lab managers, who schedule and oversee all lab activities.

Phase I of the study confirmed that ATTAIn continues to provide its users with up to date computer technology, software, and instruction designed to help them meet a variety of education and job training goals, and that program participation does in fact move users closer to reaching those goals. Many lab users have gained essential 21st century skills with regard to computer technology, and those who spent more time in the labs have reaped the greatest benefits. Phase II of the study will continue to track users once they leave the labs to determine to what extent their ATTAIn experience continues to impact their education and employment choices and successes.

# Student Success Stories



## Lucille

I am 52 and I have just completed my Associates Degree. I am currently working two jobs, which are both part time. I work as Direct Care Staff for a rehabilitation center and help take care of seven elderly women who are developmentally disabled. My other job is two days a week and my title is Independent Living Advocate at a nonprofit agency. I work with six other advocates and promote self-advocacy, give referrals, and help anyone who walks through our doors with any problems that they may have. We also lobby to change laws and meet regularly with political leaders to educate and suggest law reforms to help the disabled.

I lost my job as a factory worker of 32 years in October of 2005. I was given the opportunity to get a college degree and decided a college education would open more doors for employment and a better life style. I have always enjoyed helping people and I worked a President/Business Manager for our union for 12 years. I realized a career in some type of human service work would benefit myself and others.

I had a three month wait on unemployment before the start of the college semester. At that time, the only thing I knew how to do on a computer was to type. I knew I would have to use a computer once I started college and I would also need a computer and an email address to find a job. I knew the ATTAIn Lab could teach me how to use a computer; but they did so much more. My confidence level went up to where I actually felt I could succeed in college.

The ATTAIn Lab set me up with an email account and showed me how to use it. They let me practice getting on different websites and taught me how to use Microsoft Word. I had to take a college placement test and I am very weak in algebra or any kind of math. I was set up with practice sessions showing me how to do basic algebra and that helped me place higher than I would have on my placement exam. The ATTAIn Lab also updated my resume and it was that resume that got me my job as an Independent Living Advocate. They also gave me advice on how to give a successful interview.

The first semester in college, I had most of my assignments on the computer, including something called "My Math Lab". I could not even set it up on the computer I had just bought so I brought it

to the ATTAIN Lab. It was absolutely terrifying that I could not even get to my homework and I was ready to quit but had an appointment with the Lab that night. I had a feeling of complete hopelessness when I got here. They set it up for me and showed me how to use it and made sure it transferred to my computer at home. Whenever I had trouble understanding PowerPoint and Excel in a class of 30 computer savvy students, I would come here right after class to get caught up to the rest of the class. I ended up with an "A" in that computer course because of the ATTAIN Lab.

I do not believe I would have made it through college without the ATTAIN Lab. I was computer illiterate and terrified of any kind of technology. I started my first semester of college on an even footing because of the time and commitment from the people at the ATTAIN Lab. I am very comfortable with the computer now and have obtained the job I set out to achieve.

My job will become full time in the fall with benefits, which is a huge change in my life. Obtaining a job that I really wanted that will provide a good livelihood and stability is one of the most positive changes in my life. Instead of dreading change and new challenges, I am comfortable knowing that I can handle them; and if they do pose a problem I can always come to the ATTAIN Lab for that extra one-on-one that can give me a competitive edge. 



## Vince

I am a 53 year old man with 2 years of college experience. I suffered a stroke and needed keyboarding to help me with hand-eye coordination. During this time the Attain Lab Manager took time with me and I was able to gradually broaden the course of study to include Microsoft. Although it was slow going at first I received certificates in MS Word, Excel, Access, and Outlook, all while achieving my New York State Certification in Sterile Processing which provides me with very marketable skills

At first I did not know what to expect. Over time I began to realize what an important tool the Lab provides for me. Not just me but an entire community. If the lab had not been here I do not know how I would have accomplished what I did. The entire experience was rewarding to me. I went all the way from Palm Beach mouse tutoring to be able to type with Mavis Beacon to the tune of 19 wpm which may not sound extremely fast to you but it was a milestone accomplishment for me.

I am extremely comfortable with the Lab: I utilize it every day from email to job hunting to doing creative resumes. I was a very competent person when it came to long hand. But now I utilize what I have learned on a daily basis, from creating documents, saving, editing, and attachments to gathering news and information from around the world. Most importantly I am able to take an active role in my medical treatment. This Lab has given me access to medical information (online) and the where-with-all to discuss treatment with my Doctor not just as a patient but an informed patient. That makes all the difference in the world.





## Ada

Quite a few years ago I attended a vocational high school and completed at the same time a course for Practical Nursing. After graduation, I was licensed by the state of New York to practice as a Licensed Practical Nurse. Now, at age 58, I find myself at a stage of transition and attending EOC for computer training.

At first I attended EOC on occasional Saturday classes to review and update my self taught computer skills. Now that I have moved into the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Program, by the encouragement my first ATTAIN Lab instructor, I desire to complete the program and seek employment where I could use my medical experience along with certified computer training.

The ATTAIN Lab is conveniently available when I cannot use the computer at home. It is a place where I can ask questions. It is a place for me to work on homework or a practice session. It is conveniently located in the school that I am attending. The ATTAIN Lab has also been a classroom, a place to inquire about any problems with class work. It is a well set up environment for students to use computers.





## Jackie

I am a 19 year old female. My family is from the Dominican Republic but I was born here in the U.S. I did complete my High School Diploma and I graduated with a Regent's diploma. During my time in High School I did well and enjoyed it most of my time there. I used to work at Starbucks as a

barista before starting at EOC. But since I was full time at the job, and I wanted to attend EOC full-time too--I couldn't do both so I decided on the EOC.

I came to the EOC at first not expecting much from it since I thought it only helped people with really bad problems. But as I learned later on it's an opportunity basically for anyone trying to get ahead in life, but who has limited resources and needs extra help. Once I was done with High School I knew I wanted to continue pursuing my education, but I also knew that to get a good job it takes time. The problem I had with this is that my mother is a single parent trying to support four kids on her own and it's not easy with the money she makes. She has always done her best but I know it's tough. So I did some research on careers that pay well and don't take a long time and Medical Billing and Coding fit my needs. That career lets me use my personal skills along with my office skills.

The Attain Lab made it possible for me to research jobs, careers and ways to continue my education. I used the Internet for job search and to post my resume online for employers to find it. Microsoft Word was helpful to do such things as creating resume and cover letters. It was also a place for me to find peace and quiet and do my homework. Being able to do my homework helped me stay on top of things and do well in class. I was able to finish the program with good grades. I also have a great resume that will help me find a job in the medical field.





## John

I am forty years old, and I am currently unemployed. I dropped out of school in tenth grade as a result of what I now know was undiagnosed ADD. I went to pursue my GED, which I passed back in 1982. I am currently receiving treatment for my learning disability.

I saw several flyers that stated the opportunity to learn about utilizing computers as well as receiving job training skills. I felt it was time in my life to start making some long overdue changes such as expanding my horizons and improving my abilities and skills overall. I am currently pursuing an Associate's Degree at the College of Staten Island and I have also begun to pursue a possible semester at the Art School of N.Y., in hopes of getting involved in computer graphics and creative design. Thanks to the ATTAIN lab center, I now have the opportunities to participate in several online training courses available such as the Microsoft training sites and courses, as well as the college algebra and reading/writing courses.

Because the ATTAIN lab has many educational resources to utilize for someone who is looking to better themselves, I have already become quite knowledgeable in the internal and external workings of personal computers and have become comfortable with much of today's PC terminology. Three months ago I had no idea what BIOS or CMOS stood for and I certainly did not know how to use the Adobe PaintShop or how to search the Internet.

These programs enhance my own value and my employability options. In addition to the previous mentioned programs I also am utilizing the reading material such as the A Cert Plus Exam Text so that I may become certified in all phases of computer technology.

I have seen a dramatic improvement of my confidence and my comfort with today's technology and a continuing enhancing of my life skills and ambitions.





## Robert

I am 23 years old. I live with and take care of my parents who are partially disabled and I work whenever I can.

I saw a flyer for the ATTAIN lab and the community center director introduced me to the lab manager. I told him that I was interested in computers, fixing them, building them and computer programming and that I wanted to attend college. We sat down and we developed a plan. I was tested by the lab manager to see what areas I should brush on before taking the entrance exams.

The software programs were very helpful. I used the college prep and intro to technology programs. I was able to see what areas needed work and where I was strong. I did well on the tests especially the computer questions. We wrote out a plan and the dates by which I should have things done. I researched colleges that I wanted to attend. I chose SUNY Delhi as the school to enroll in. I used Microsoft Office and the Internet to file my SUNY application online and scheduled an interview upstate. Once I was accepted I completed my FAFSA online as well and received a financial aid package. I was very happy. I also completed a new resume.

The college prep software was very helpful as was the research that I completed online about Delhi and the town really helped me make the jump. The counseling provided by the lab manager was truly helpful, he is my mentor. He stresses the successes and taught me so that I am now enrolled at Delhi and started my second term.

I speak with more confidence and understand how to relate better to fellow students and professors too. I am in college. While my GPA is not the best I am committed to completing the required courses. The lab courses are really a basic intro into technology I guess that is good but for me I am now advanced in my computer tech knowledge.

I am more independent and understand that I have to manage my life. I have to say being away from home has changed my life and direction I now know what it takes to survive on my own. I enjoy campus activities and socializing with fellow students. On school breaks I volunteer my time at the lab when I return to Staten Island.





## Theresa

I am 24 years old and have completed my GED. When I came to the lab I was unemployed. I have a slight learning disability. I am single and take care of my mother. I wanted to find a full time job to help my situation at home. When I met the teacher he explained to me the programs but the most important thing was that he told me that we must do a plan to see what I need to know so that

I can get a real good job or enter college. He said that since I spoke two languages that was a big plus for me.

He suggested that I take some tests on the computer so I would know where I am with my education. I enjoyed this and I was surprised how much I knew and remember. We worked on a resume that I typed up myself and saved it to a floppy. He then gave me a free email address to use. He has a list of over 80 places to search for jobs on the lab wall. He taught me how easy it is to use the keyboard and mouse to search for jobs. I applied for many jobs by filling out applications with those companies that I liked. The best part was having a resume that I could now attach to the online job application. I like the job counseling the lab manager provided to me, he was always available.

We practiced how to answer interview questions at the lab and I found a job. I was looking for security work but instead I was able to get a job as an escort/ Spanish-English translator. I worked with nurses and escorted them on their field visits to their client homes. I worked in an office with records, files and answered the telephone. The lab manager was like a mentor to me, I now know what this word means. He gave us good advice. I learned to use Microsoft Word. The resume and the practice helped a lot. From this job I was able to apply for a higher level security officer job and I now have a full time night job at the SI docks. And I intend to register for college courses.

My confidence level is high. I learned to be proud of what I did and what I can do. I now know that I am able to find work with all my skills. Speaking Spanish enabled me to get a job. All this time I took that for granted. I am more sure about planning things in my life. I learned that planning is a very good thing to do. I know how to use the Internet much better than before. I got to know people my age and older who are trying to change and gave me good advice. I speak better, choose my words and understand more of what is said to me.

My life has changed for the better, better jobs and new chances to improve my life. I am young but I want to grow with my life. I didn't think I had so many skills until the lab program opened it up to me. I am now employed. I talk and speak with more confidence.





## Alice

I am 53 and I have three years of college and I am presently unemployed. I found out about the SUNY ATTAIN lab in the fall of 2007 at the Department of Labor. While using the resources here I was able to upgrade my computer skills without the added financial burden. The lab managers were very helpful and directed me through the Microsoft training modules. I was able to come to the lab on a fairly regular basis.

My goal was to work on my Microsoft IT Certification. My long-term goal was to complete my university education. I felt that if I could steadily work on the training modules I would be able to bring my computer skills up to par. Since I had been working in jobs that did not utilize my computer training for over a year I was feeling that I was losing my edge. I wanted to work on the newer versions of Microsoft's programs.

I work on Microsoft Excel, Access, Outlook, Power Point, FrontPage and Word. They were all available here at the SUNY lab! The 2003 Microsoft Office version was available. In addition, I was able to download a 2007 Microsoft Office version at home. That meant that I was working on the latest versions on both fronts! I became very comfortable working in both venues.

In addition to the Microsoft MOS training modules I was also job hunting. That is how I found out about AmeriCorps! I applied for an AmeriCorps VISTA internship and was accepted. Next year, I will be flying out to Albuquerque, New Mexico for my AmeriCorps VISTA training. When that is completed, I will be flying to my one-year assignment in Northeast Oklahoma. While there I will be recruiting foster families to work with their Therapeutic Foster Care program. As a VISTA worker I will receive a stipend as well as full medical and dental coverage for the year. In addition, at the end of the year I was given a choice of a monetary stipend of \$1400 or an educational grant of \$4725. I chose the educational grant, which is payable over a seven-year period. This grant may be used to pay off student loans if needed. I plan on using half of my educational grant to work toward completing my bachelor's degree. I am looking forward to my assignment in Oklahoma. It is an opportunity to meet new people and to work in a setting that will provide me the opportunity to make a difference!

I wish to thank you for providing the SUNY ATTAIN lab. When I came to the lab to work on the training modules something more was happening. I was able to feel better about my situation and gradually I was able to make a change! Just having a wonderful resource here in my little town has opened a door wide for me.

I have been able to become more positive about my life situation. I feel more confident and I have been able to take the steps to help myself. The resources and support provided here at the SUNY ATTAIN lab have been instrumental in that growth process. Thanks so much for making the lab accessible to me during a time of transition. I plan on using the lab again when I return from my internship!





# Appendix

## ISI Courseware Offerings

### Assessment Tools

Adult Basic Skills: Language  
Adult Basic Skills: Mathematics  
Adult Basic Skills: Reading

Basic Assessment Mathematics  
Basic Assessment Reading

CNA Test Prep  
Security Guard Assessment Test

### Academic Series

Developmental Mathematics  
Developmental Reading  
Developmental Writing

High School Proficiency (College Remedial) Mathematics  
High School Proficiency (College Remedial) Reading  
High School Proficiency (College Remedial) Writing Mechanics

Foundations of College Math  
Advanced Reading Comprehension

### Employability Skills

Workplace Mathematics  
Workplace Reading  
Working with People

### Occupational Series

Building Maintenance Carpentry  
Building Maintenance Electric  
Building Maintenance Plumbing  
Child Care Level I  
Child Care Level II  
Child Care Level III

Customer Service Representative  
Introduction to Office Technology  
Office Worker Program  
Office Skills Program

Health Care Worker Program  
Home Care Aide  
Nursing Assistant

Security Guard Cultural Awareness  
Security Guard Pre-Assignment  
Security Officer Training Online

### Personal Development Tools

Life Skills Program  
Parenting  
You Can Make It Happen





## Measurement Incorporated