

## **New PBS Offering is a Sitcom That Teaches Basic English**

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### **Body**

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Hoping to reach the nearly 14 million adults who lack basic English skills, four states with large immigrant populations are teaming with PBS and the federal government to launch an educational television series.

The 26-part series, called "Crossroads Cafe," is designed to teach basic English reading and writing skills in an entertaining but also informative setting. The situation comedy follows the lives of six people of various ethnic backgrounds.

It will be the first nationally televised English instruction program and will air weekly this fall on Public Broadcasting Service affiliates. The U.S. Information Agency plans to televise the series in Central and Latin America.

The states - California, New York, Florida and Illinois - and the Education Department and Immigration and Naturalization Service hope the series goes beyond TV viewers.

Videotapes of the program will be distributed to English as a Second Language education programs in the four states, classrooms, and to organizations that provide services to immigrants. Accompanying the TV series are teachers' guides, a workbook for students, and a photo guide with simple captions.

At a Capitol Hill news conference, Education Secretary Richard Riley said "Crossroads Cafe" should help reach immigrants unable to attend classes either because they are juggling jobs or can't get a babysitter or find transportation.

"It can also help 24 million other Americans who need a boost in their reading skills," Riley said, stressing the benefits of literacy. "Adults who cannot read have a hard time providing for their families, especially in these times when nearly every new job that is created requires a worker to be highly literate and skilled."

The four states' education agencies each contributed Adult Education Act funds to underwrite creation and production of "Crossroads Cafe." The INS kicked in \$ 1 million more, said agency Commissioner Doris Meissner.

Meissner said "Crossroads Cafe" fits with her agency's effort to naturalize as many as possible of the 6 million people who are eligible for citizenship. To become a U.S. citizen, applicants must demonstrate a knowledge of English, civics and government.

"A TV series like this is just a terrific way for people who want to apply for citizenship to meet the requirements," she said in an interview.

PBS is making the series available to its 350 local affiliates nationwide.

### **Classification**

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