Bridging the Vision

by Joanne Huebner

Fish Don't Think About Water

On November 18, Daquanna Harrison spoke to Virginia in an AE&L ReMix plenary, "Bringing Your Whole Self: Discussions on Diversity in Adult Education." One particular thing she said stuck with me and currently resides on a sticky note on my monitor: "Fish don't think about water." She was speaking of social identities in the context of educational equity and our own journey in diversity, equity, and inclusion work, work that is both personal and collective. In her article on page 20, "Why I am Excited About #EdEquity VA (and why you should be too!)," Daquanna outlines how leaders and educators (that's you!) can support each other and enable success in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work.

In our last issue, we heard about state agency and partner support for adult education programs. In this issue, the focus turns to surrounding students with supports that respond to their academic and social identities, and doing DEI work in the process. "Adult Education, a Force on the Journey of Diversity, Equity, and Equality", the theme of this issue, was chosen by Dr. Ferebee-Johns, Supervisor/Program Administrator for Adult Education with Region 20's Chesapeake Public Schools,

THE VIRGINIA ADULT LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER
Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU

who curated article authors and guided content. For this she turned to the expertise of adult education instructors. Dana Hathorn describes "co-curricular workshops" (p 14) provided by community colleges that work to address the needs of students transitioning through adult education and Freida Idisi-Cole shares how to engage students' voices in the design of their learning on p. 12. Nicole Jordan (p. 9) reminds us that motivation to stay the course of learning requires supporting the basic needs of adult learners, often not related to learning at all; this comes when approaching instruction with an equity mindset. Tawana Ford concours with a one-step-at-a-time approach (p.18), stating, "Be cognizant of the students' strengths, seek some success first, then take the next step. Monica Ferebee shares a silver lining of the pandemic in removing barriers and meeting basic needs, "[Distance and blended learning] is more accommodating to those students who work and have limited time, lack transportation, have families, or possess a variety of ailments of disabilities," (p. 6). These are a few examples of many student support stories across the Commonwealth.

Dr. Silver Pacuilla (p. 26) states, "The Virginia Department of Education recognizes that education is our most effective tool to reduce poverty, address racism, and sustain economic advancement for all Virginians." Adult education practitioners know this in their hearts as evidenced by the stories in this issue. This is the water we swim in. "Fish don't think about water." Are we so surrounded by the water that is in the bowl that we don't jump out to look at it from the outside once in a while? We are all in our own place on the DEI support continuum, personally and collectively, as adult educators. But wherever we are, Valerie Washington recommends (p.16) how we can all work in support of each other's DEI integration in adult education: jump outside of your own bowl, examine the water that surrounds you (participate in professional development toward an equity mindset), help others to think about the water (complete an equity audit of organizational practices, examine curriculum, change the narrative), and continue to refresh the bowl that supports our adult learners in meaningful and sustainable ways (take part in and facilitate dialogue).

Joanne Huebner is the manager of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC). She leads the team of educational specialists in carrying out the VALRC mission of equipping the field of adult education and literacy with essential skills and resources.

Meet our Guest Editor

Dr. Fontaine Monique Ferebee-Johns

Dr. Fontaine M. Ferebee-Johns holds a B.S. in sociology from Virginia Union University, an M.A. in severe disabilities from Norfolk State University, an Ed.S. from Old Dominion University, and an Ed.D, from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech).

Dr. Ferebee-Johns is employed with Chesapeake Public Schools and has served in the capacity of special education teacher focusing on students living with autism, Coordinator for Adult Education, and is currently Supervisor/Program Administrator for Adult Education. Her professional memberships include the National Education Association, the Chesapeake Education Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE), and the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE). Community service affiliations for Dr. Ferebee-Johns include memberships with First Baptist Church South Hill, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Virginia Union University National Alumni Association, the Urban League of Hampton Roads, and the NAACP.

Editor's note: Special thanks to Dr. Fontaine Ferebee-Johns for guest editing this issue of *PROGRESS*. In addition to choosing the theme of the issue, "Adult Education, a Force on the Journey of Diversity, Equity, and Equality", Dr. Ferebee-Johns curated article authors and guided content.

READY SET ZOOM
Adult Education Takes Off Focused on Providing Equity Above Equality

by Dr. Fontaine M. Ferebee-Johns

As adult educators maneuvering our way through meeting the needs of adult learners from diverse backgrounds in the midst of a pandemic, it is vital that we also remain focused on the challenge of assuring equality and equity, along with knowing the difference between the two. Just as there are six letters in one term and eight in the other, when placed alongside equity, equality falls short where systemic injustices are in operation. The terms equality and equity are often used synonymously. Conversely, they differ in essential ways.

> *The stakes are too high—for our children, for our economy, for our country. It's time for all of us to come together—parents and students, principals and teachers, business leaders and elected officials—to end America's dropout crisis.*   *—B. Obama (2010, unpaged)*

Equality, more often than not, is defined as treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the identical opportunities without considering individualized need. Equality becomes a neutralizer in the aspects of society whereby diversity or inclusiveness have been out of reach or distant and where being separate is better served.

Equity refers to proportional representation (by race, class, gender, etc.) in those same opportunities, while taking into consideration what an individual needs. Equity is a step in the right direction, but its reach may fall short if the gap it is intended to bridge goes unrealized. The achievement of equity, policies and procedures may result in an unequal distribution of resources. As evidenced by the illustration that follows, equality is an even distribution of resources versus equity being the distribution of resources as needed.
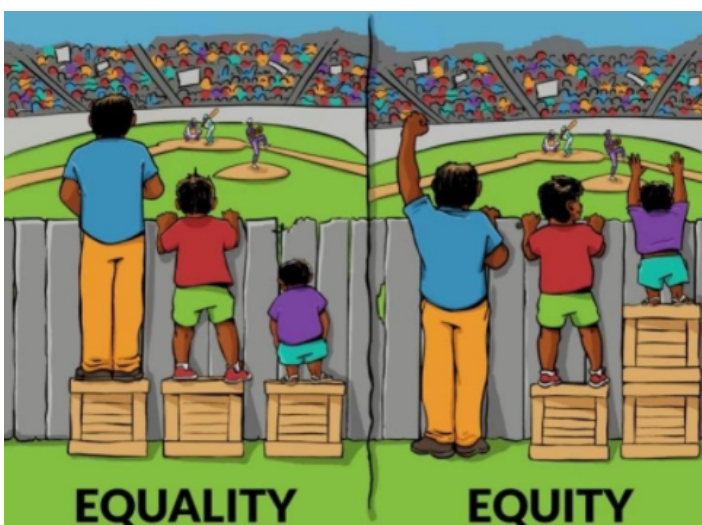
Note. Equality vs. Equity [Image], by Interaction Institute for Social Change, Artist: Angus Maquire, 2016, Interaction Institute for Social Change. (https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/) (http://madewithangus.com/portfolio/equality-vs-equity/). CC BY-NC 4.0

According to the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) (2005), effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement, striving for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. Further, "the exploration of new understandings, the synthesis of new information, and the integration of these insights throughout professional spheres can lead future educational leaders to a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing issues of student learning and equity" (Brown-Ruzzi, 2006, p. 703).

Not every student walking into an adult education program is prepared to work towards earning a high school credential. With this in mind, it becomes the primary focus of adult education leaders, in collaboration with teachers and staff, to assure that every student has an educational plan that is equitable and goal-inspired for postsecondary education or employment. Statistically, African American and Hispanic students have a more difficult time meeting with success in a traditional high school with nearly 40% failing to complete high school in three years. This rate is almost 15% higher than their Caucasian counterparts (Blankstein et. al., 2016). Thus, it is crucial that adult education programs take the extra steps to make certain that students from diverse backgrounds and cultures have positive educational experiences that promote equity when entering adult education. For example,

Step Into the 4th Box

Continue the story of these two equality & equity boxes further to the third, liberation, and beyond with [free DEI tools and resources from the Center for Story-Based Strategy](). Access images, teaching tools, and learning materials designed to help DEI learners explore, assess, vision, and pursue DEI goals in order to produce outcomes both personally and professionally.

educators should enact ways to reassure students that their traditional high school experiences are behind them. This assurance can be achieved by adhering to the following components during the student orientation process.

- Learning is accomplished at their own pace.
- There are no pre-set completion dates.
- There is no competition between peers for class rank and position.

Adult educators must be *Ready* and *Set* to *Zoom* into the principle of placing **EQUITY** above Equality when assisting adult learners with setting educational and postsecondary goals. This assistance comes when adult educators see adult learners as individuals or various colors, races, genders, socioeconomic classes, cultures, ethnicities, etc. all having their own unique stories that must be heard to promote their journeys towards becoming lifelong learners.

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By Monica Ferebee

Launching from Brokenness to Success

In order for our students to succeed within and outside of our programs and achieve their high school equivalency diploma, we must examine their educational inadequacies or the students will continue to repeat the cycle of falling short of their desired educational and career goals.

Crayons and people are colorful and yet, often broken. Do we just throw them away? No, we mend and piece them back together. There are broken students who have been mentally, physically, socially, and financially deprived or abused. These students have dropped out of high school and entered our GED® programs. Recently, we have been acting in the role of not only instructors, but also counselors, friends, parents, and life-coaches. Most of us who have taught within GED® programs for years have witnessed the hurt and suffering, pitfalls, and often unsuccessful attempts of our students. As educators, we spend quality time and invest in them, embracing every flaw and shortcoming. There are GED® programs which care about their students' wants and needs, and strive to invest in their educational and emp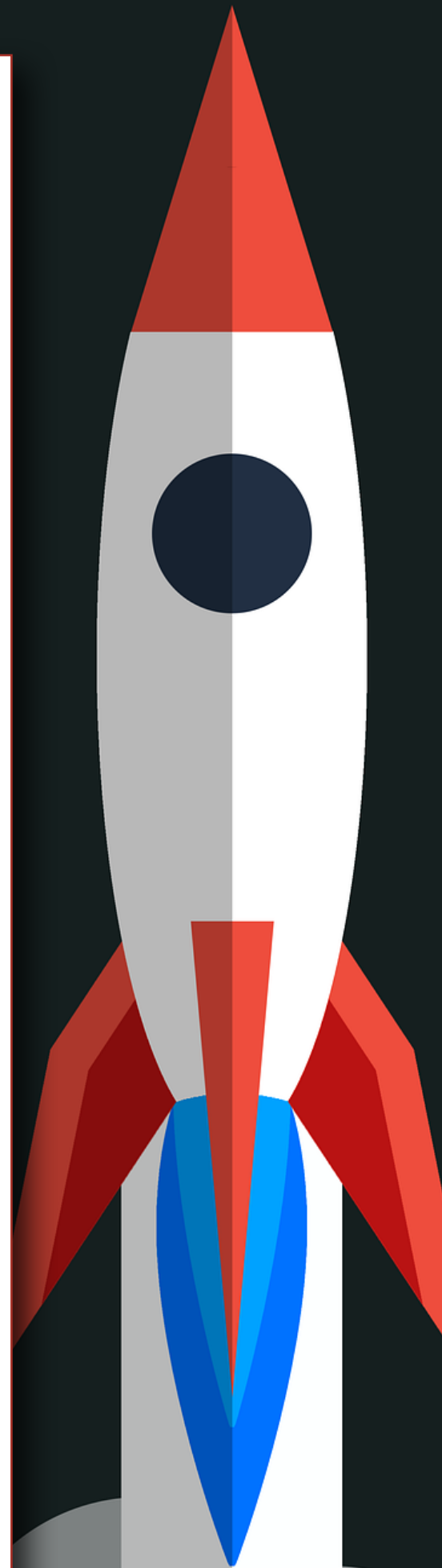loyment successes. In order for our students to succeed within and outside of our programs and achieve their high school equivalency diploma, we must examine their educational inadequacies or the students will continue to repeat the cycle of falling short of their desired educational and career goals.

First, we must look at the numerous reasons why they opted to drop out of high school. Those reasons often include lack of academic successes and preparation, excessive tardiness and truancy, pregnancy and numerous sick days, disengagement, financial hardships/homelessness, prescriptive and illicit drug addictions, mental and physical disabilities, and behavioral issues (suspensions and expulsions). High school dropout rates in the United States are below 7% and have fluctuated at less than 0.4% at a steady rate annually since 1970 for several reasons, with the main reasons having more support programs (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Table 219.75. Percentage of high school dropouts among persons 16 to 24 years old (status dropout rate) and percentage distribution of status dropouts, by labor force status and years of school completed: Selected years, 1970 through 2018

[Standard errors appear in parentheses]

Year	Status dropout rate	Percentage distribution of status dropouts, by labor force status[1]				Percentage distribution of status dropouts, by years of school completed				
		Total	In labor force		Not in labor force	Total	Less than 9 years	9 years	10 years	11 or 1 yea
			Employed[2]	Unemployed						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1
2015[3]	5.9 (0.26)	100.0 (†)	41.7 (2.10)	14.2 (1.48)	44.1 (2.10)	100.0 (†)	14.5 (1.67)	13.9 (1.40)	21.3 (1.65)	50.2 (2
2016[3]	6.1 (0.27)	100.0 (†)	46.6 (1.99)	13.9 (1.31)	39.6 (1.90)	100.0 (†)	17.6 (1.91)	10.8 (1.14)	21.9 (1.64)	49.7 (2
2017[3]	5.8 (0.26)	100.0 (†)	46.7 (1.91)	8.3 (1.09)	44.9 (1.98)	100.0 (†)	21.0 (2.14)	9.8 (1.22)	20.3 (1.76)	49.0 (2
2018[3]	5.7 (0.27)	100.0 (†)	50.7 (2.02)	8.5 (1.24)	40.8 (2.10)	100.0 (†)	17.0 (2.03)	10.3 (1.26)	20.6 (1.74)	52.0 (2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October, 1970 through 2018. (This table was prepared November 2019.)

Secondly, within GED® preparation programs, we must continue to expose, encourage, and groom students with meaningful materials, practices, and educational and life skills lessons. Students strive for things from which they can understand and grasp—within reach. Many of our GED® preparation programs provide services to individuals who have been broken and disengaged within the school systems due to previous underlying conditions. According to Doll et al. (2013) there are "pivotal events which lead to dropout" (p. 1) and involve the culmination of events that they term as the push, pull, and falling out factors. The push factors include school-related disciplinary consequences, the pull factors include out-of-school enticements like jobs and family, and the falling out factors involve the students becoming disengaged without the push or pull factors being agents.

The complexity of these issues has been examined by Doll et al. (2013) and several others, and many GED® preparation programs have allied with others to bring about changes that will not only benefit the students; but also the families, communities, and government. Let's start with instruction. Today, most schools are offering more than interactive, integrative, and cooperative learning. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, most schools have included distance and blended learning. This is more accommodating to those students who work and have limited time, lack transportation, have families, or possess a variety of ailments or disabilities. With the introduction of distance and blended learning throughout the country, it will be interesting to analyze the dropout rates in the new findings or studies.

> *"Now is the time to collect the dull, broken crayons and mend them together for a brighter future.*"
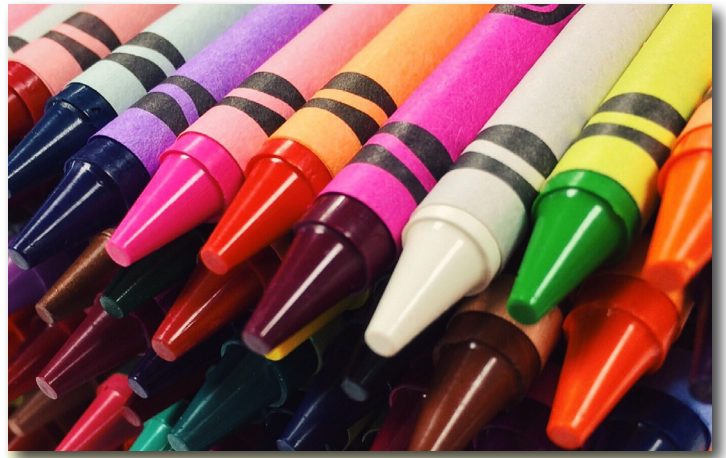
With the available and ever-increasing learning opportunities, students that were once colorful and then became disengaged, slighted, and/or damaged; now have a better chance of success. Not only can these students become successful within the classroom, but also outside of the classroom with the introduction of more career-readiness programs, trade schools, college fairs, and job fairs. Now is the time to collect the dull, broken crayons and mend them together for a brighter future. ⊙

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Learn more:

Fear and Learning: Trauma-Related Factors in the Adult Education Process

Trauma and Adult Learning

Trauma Impacts Adult Learners: Here's Why

How Trauma Impacts the Brains of Adult Learners

How Trauma Impacts Your Adult Client-Learners and What You Can Do About It - video

Tool for Transformation: Cooperative Inquiry as a Process for Healing from Internalized Oppression

Healing from the Effects of Internalized Oppression

Racial Equity Tools: Addressing Trauma and Healing

Monica Ferebee *is a 17-year veteran educator of the Chesapeake public school system with more than 23 total years of experience in teaching and ten-plus years in the Chesapeake Adult and Continuing Education program. Monica received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Norfolk State University and her educational specialist degree from Old Dominion University. Monica is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.*

STAYING THE COURSE:

Keeping Adult Learners Motivated to Finish Strong
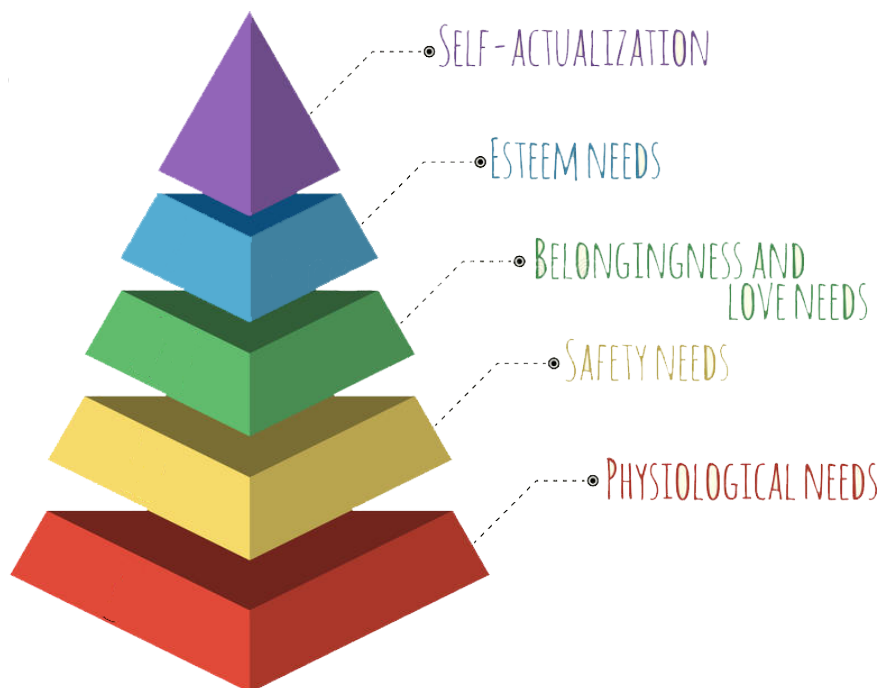
by Nicole R. Jordan

As the world is transitioning to a new way of living and conscience thinking, education has become one of the most popular and important topics of this shift. Pre-K through twelfth-grade students need adequate educational resources to continue their instruction at home, and schools are making this possible for all students to have these necessary tools. Adult education learners should not be excluded from this list. It is essential for adult learners to have access to possessions, such as computer/internet sources, as well as communication with adult learning programs and instructors. Due to lack of resources, trouble with understanding class instructions, and the absence of inclusive class practices; students have been blindsided by the difficulty of both learning from home and the lack of unbiased instruction from their educators. These factors have adult learners taking a step back from their educational path.

Nowadays, homes have become crowded with entire families continuing their education online with a range of students from Pre-K through adults. Precedence is being given to the younger students because of their need for online help. Moreover, adults have many responsibilities and their education waits until life calms down to start again. Nevertheless, staying the course for an adult learner's educational milestone is significant to help alleviate financial stress, gain career advancement, and build self-confidence, just to name a few.

As we know, adult learning education can range from courses and programs for students who are out of school and/or college including basic literacy, personal fulfillment, and attainment of advanced degrees. Because of the unparalleled times of today's society, adults are utilizing their survival skills and taking care of their most important needs. As

explained in Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization; Physical, Security, Social, and even Ego all take priority over Self-Actualization, which is the part of ourselves that fulfills potential and has meaningful goals (Burton, 2012). Education is also a part of this section of Self-Actualization. As the pyramid scales upward, Physical is the foundation of needs and our adult learners are always fulfilling this area until it is secure enough to move up the pyramid.

Maslow

- Self-Actualization
- Esteem needs
- Belongingness and Love needs
- Safety needs
- Physiological needs

Knowles

PILLAR #1: A MATURING SELF CONCEPT

PILLAR #2 INCREASING EXPERIENCE

PILLAR #3: AN INCREASING READINESS TO LEARN

PILLAR #4: A SHIFTING APPLICATION & ORIENTATION

PILLAR #5: AN INTERNAL MOTIVATION TO LEARN
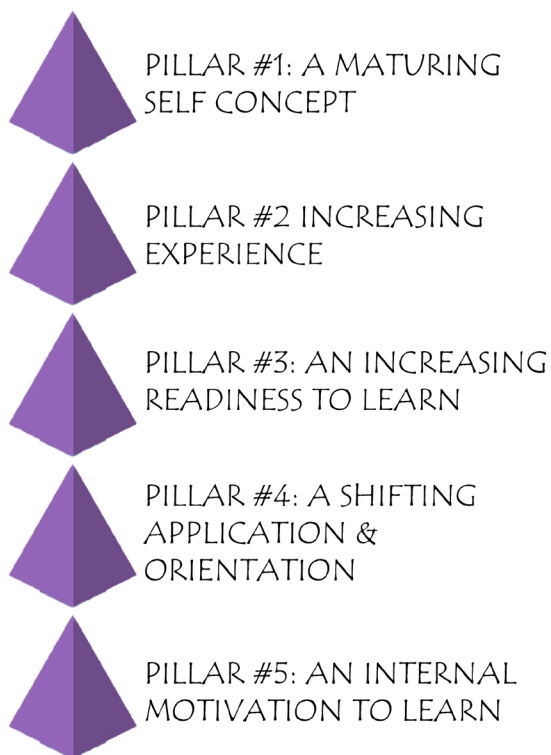
Education is imperative to adult learners. Professor Malcom Knowles defined the term andragogy in the 1970s which refers to the adult learner and the five pillars that are essential for understanding them (Carmichael, n.d.; Graham, 2017). Each one explains the necessity for adult students to continue to strive towards their goals. Pillar #5 is important to helping the adult learner push forward in their Internal Motivation to Learn. Even though the adult student takes time off to take care of significant matters, they still have the desire to finish their educational journey.

> *Inclusion in the classroom setting will help maintain a students' wish to learn, continue, and finish their program because the instructor shows their desire for fairness.*

As adult educators, we have the responsibility to our students to assist them with their aspiration to complete their education outcome, i.e. GED® diploma, certification, degree, or personal fulfillment. Our adult learners will resume classes. When they do, it is important to provide the students necessary online and/ or in-person instruction with:

- impartial educational materials;
- easy-to-follow guides for retrieving class information;
- multiple ways to communicate with the instructor; and
- unconventional options for accessing class and turning in assignments.

Educators must show learners their inclusive academic environment no matter if the class is online or in-person. Inclusion in the classroom setting will help maintain a students' wish to learn, continue, and finish their program because the instructor shows their desire of fairness. Adult learners may have to become creative during these times to finish their education by using alternative devices besides a computer to access class or find Wi-Fi at a nearby business to retrieve assignments. Instructors need to be sensitive to these situations and offer support and affirmations to keep the students encouraged and motivated.

Instructors have an important role in keeping students engaged as Knowles noted during his research with the five pillars of adult learners. Students want to learn as part of their Self-Actualization even though it is not always a priority. When times are tough, perseverance is critical. Sustaining adult learn-

ers to stay the course is to maintain inclusion and equality with instruction and communication as well as provide positive affirmations so that they can continue their learning path with determination.

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by Freida Idsi-Cole

Tips for Building a Successful Adult Education Class

Adult learning classrooms, virtual or otherwise, are a melting pot of individuals with a broad range of experiences. They enroll in courses for many reasons: to find employment, to learn English, to learn to read and write, to try again at finishing high school, or to learn a skill they have always wanted to attain.

Whatever the reasons, each class has a diverse cohort which comes with a very wide range of capabilities. And therein lies one of the biggest challenges for teachers—identifying the starting point that doesn't overwhelm some whilst remaining challenging enough for others. For this we can turn to differentiation, ensuring that each of our activities and assignments has extension exercises to stretch those that have grasped ideas and concepts quicker than others.

But what about specific techniques for adult learners? How can we improve engagement in adult education, particularly now that we are navigating online learning and students have the added pressures and distractions of learning from home in the "new normal"?

1 Allow students to contribute to the design of their learning.
Adult learners are practical in their approach to learning. They are not interested in something that will benefit them ten years down the line. They want to know that time invested now will make an impact on their life straightaway—that they can reap real-world benefits and apply that learning to every day life. I suggest that where possible, students should contribute themselves to the design and development of their lessons, within reason of course. For example, let's take numeracy. In advance of each module, you could ask your class to choose the subject matter for the assignments and exercises—think of what could be relevant and give a choice—household budgeting, taxes, or calculating deals and discounts in the supermarket. Your group will choose what is of most interest or most useful to them, or which they find the most fun—but overall they will be invested in the module because they have become part of the design process which is key for adult learners. They want to be involved, and they want to know that what they are learning will directly impact their lives, and this addresses both. I appreciate that some subjects and courses will be easier to tie in to real-life scenarios than others, but where it's not possible, think about topics that would interest the group, and again, let them make the final decision on the assignment topics and subject matter so that they are contributing to the design of their learning.

2 **Adapt new concepts to everyday subjects.**

Abdul Malik Muftau (2014) from the Teachers College of Columbia University highlights that "kids learn faster than adults because the prefrontal cortex of the brain, where working memory is stored, is more developed in adults than children" (unpaged). This development means that "adults experience functional fixedness and that makes adults see everything as it is" (unpaged). Kids' minds are flexible, therefore making it easier for them to pick up new concepts. With this in mind, adapting new concepts to subjects that adult students can use and visualize from their everyday lives will help them to learn while enabling them to recognize the subject matter and the concept they are learning.

3 **Design for quick wins.**

Another important consideration with adult learning relates to student confidence, or lack thereof, in learning. Returning to education is daunting, particularly if it did not go well the first time or if it has been some time since they have studied. Building motivation, self-esteem, and confidence in their own abilities is an important hook to keep adult learners engaged. When designing your course content and modules, it is worth starting with an assignment, area, or concept that will allow you and your students to see "quick wins". Start with the easier concepts, even if it is not always the natural order to do things, and this will help remove any anxiety they have about not being capable. It will give them a natural stepping-stone of confidence and ability for the more detailed or complex areas. For example, when teaching definite and indefinite articles in literacy or English as a second language, couple this grammar topic with simple vocabulary such as fruit and vegetables, which people already have a familiarity with from supermarkets, restaurants, and menus. That way they are accomplishing two new skills, but at least one of them they can pick up easily, leading to a feeling of success and a desire to keep learning and achieving.

Lastly, keep it interactive, keep it fun, and don't be afraid to go off topic. Adult learners have a wealth of knowledge and experience and are used to discussing views, giving opinions, and sharing knowledge. Giving the odd five minutes here and there can help build bonds and an inclusive community, and that too helps with student engagement and retention. 🔽

Reference

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Freida Idisi-Cole serves as Program Manager for the Franklin City Public Schools Adult & Continuing Education program. Freida manages the adult basic education and English literacy program within the division which includes planning, organizing, developing, implementing, and evaluating adult education services. She collaborates with agencies and organizations within the community to build relationships with vulnerable populations to offer them the education, training, and job placement support they need the most. She is an advocate for life-long learning and progress.

> *We have to make a concerted effort to provide experiences where students can learn from and share with each other, as well as build on the strengths and weaknesses of one another.*

As a member of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the mission of Tidewater Community College (TCC) is to "provide collegiate education and training to adults of all ages and backgrounds, helping them achieve their individual goals and contribute as citizens and workers to the viability of an increasingly global community" (About TCC, 2020). TCC has a very diverse group of learners ranging from a wide array of ethnicities and ages. It is our goal to carry out this mission in each and every one of our students with a focus on diversity, equity, and equality. In order to do this, not only do we provide the academic programs to students in order for them to achieve their academic and career goals, but we also provide appropriate resources to accompany those programs.

From Adult Education to Community College

by Dana Hathorn

TCC resources are vast and tailored to all students, thus making the transition from adult education to the community college environment exciting and rewarding. We are continuously creating and implementing co-curricular workshops to address the needs or the students. Those workshops include but are not limited to:

- Test-taking Skills
- Transferring to a Four-year college/ University
- Balancing School and Work
- Advising
- Understanding Financial Aid
- Communicating with Instructors
- Study Skills

Not only are there workshops, but clubs and organizations are established as entertaining outlets to provide extra-curricular activities to contribute to the whole students. Those clubs range from special interest groups to academic-focused groups. A few of the clubs include Math, Garden, Anime, Criminal Justice, Theater, and Gender and Sexuality Alliance. We pride ourselves for offerings which will interest all students regardless of race, ethnicity, or background. We make a concerted effort to provide experiences where students can learn from and share with each other, as well as build on the strengths and weaknesses of one another.

During this virtual season we are now living in, providing these offerings has presented both challenges and opportunities. There are some students who are technologically limited in ability and accessibility. We continue to be creative in developing resources, such as the Computers for Student Success program, which will assist them in reaching their goals. While on the other hand, virtual offerings enable us to reach across the college reaching more students, versus being campus specific.

TCC will continue to be accessible to all. As a reaffirmation to our mission, "Open access to high-quality, affordable education to prepare students for transfer to a four-year baccalaureate institution, as well as for entry or advancement in the workforce. Cultural diversity as a critically important strength for students to meet the changing needs of a pluralistic, democratic society" (About TCC, 2020). We will remain of service to our community.

Reference

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How to Make Adult Programs & Classrooms More Inclusive

by Valerie Washington

Year 2020 has been a tough year for everyone, especially for adult learners who identify as BIPOC. Not only has COVID-19 ravaged communities of color, hospitalizing and killing BIPOC at higher rates than their White counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020), it has also put a spotlight on systemic racism and inequities in healthcare, criminal justice, and educational systems (Race Forward, n.d.). Also, while sheltering in place, the United States watched as several unarmed Black women and men were murdered by the police (Donaghue, 2020). There has been a call for review in many spaces to address and make sure that programs which serve a diverse population, including adult education programs, are not perpetuating and uplifting systemic racism through policies and educational content born in dominant, White Eurocentric culture. The following are suggestions on how to make adult programs and classrooms more inclusive and better serve adult learners of color.

Undergo professional development.

Teachers who engage in professional development learning opportunities such as trauma-informed education are able to positively change their practices (Brunzell et al., 2019). Many adult learners have experienced some type of trauma in their lives which may affect how they view the classroom and make it difficult to learn. Instructors who undergo trauma-informed educational training will develop a different way of thinking about some common issues that they might see in their classroom. Trauma-informed instructors may also provide a support that their students never had before and could become a game changer in how they view education. Implicit bias training can assist instructors in discovering their own personal bias that they may bring to the classroom. Personal biases towards poor people or BIPOC can take away from the work of empowering students to better their lives through literacy and workforce development.

Perform an equity audit.

Hiring a professional to evaluate your center in terms of finding more equitable ways to operate— and promote diversity and inclusion— can be a game changer. This can also be done in-house. An equity audit is also a great way to reevaluate mission statement, values, goals, and workplace culture of the organization and the programs provided (Proudman, 2015). EdEquityVA provides an easy-to-use tool for conducting your own equity audit and one for planning when your students to return to school.

Solicit different narratives.

Traditionally, history books promote the narrative of the dominant culture of the western European White population. For many adult education programs across the state, this narrative doesn't resemble that of the students in the classrooms. Instead of teach-

ing literacy through traditional textbooks, call upon stories and histories written by BIPOC that share different perspectives. Allow students to read books by authors that look like them. Call upon oral and localized histories. BIPOC are the foundation of American culture and should be celebrated and learned about more than once a year.

Facilitate dialogues about race.

Dialogues are a great way to learn from folks through thoughtful, facilitated conversations. If done well, participants of different backgrounds will feel safe enough to share their opinions, feelings, and stories without feeling judged. Keep in mind that each individual has their own opinions and experiences and should not be made to speak for their race or a subset of people.

Get rid of the "Other" box.

Does the application to your adult program ask for demographic information? If so, does it have an "other" box for applicants' race, ethnicity, or gender that isn't listed? The concept of "othering" throughout history has been a way to devalue people who identify as BIPOC and those with gender identities that many people don't understand. Culture and gender identity is a large part of what make our adult learners diverse. While subtle, getting rid of the "other" box is a way for centers to validate prospective students. Extensively writing out more races, ethnic groups, and gender identities on applications would also improve data collection for adult programs as folks who check "other" do not share a cultural or gender identity with other folks who check the same box.

Last and most importantly, practice self care.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work is difficult and requires a lot of deconstructing of thought processes and norms taught by families, friends, and personal experiences. The work calls for sharing of power that can be uncomfortable for many people who have never had to do so. Take your time. Lean into the work, and take care of yourself. ✅

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Valerie Washington lives in Charlottesville where she has worked as an ABE instructor and tutor for more than two years. During the day, she assists individuals experiencing homelessness find housing and get off the streets. She advocates for a living wage, fair housing, and creating equitable spaces for all people. Valerie is currently pursuing her master's degree in urban and regional planning through the L. Douglas Wilder School at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Other reads recommended by Valerie:

An Anti-Racist Reading List

Virginia Black History Attractions

VDOE Virginia's First People Pasat & Present, Culture, Language

Beloved Community C-Ville

Virginia Museum of History & Culture, Share Your Story

Take One Step at a Time, Please!

by Tawana Ford

*A*s an adult student, seeking a General Equivalency Degree (GED®) and an Integrated Education and Training (IET) certification simultaneously is a rather lofty challenge. Stepping up to reclaim academic credentials while working and balancing a family is a considerable task for any adult learner but particularly for those who have statistically underperformed in primary and secondary school. Broad circumstances such as poor attendance, disciplinary actions, uninterest in school, or home environment contribute to why students don't earn a high-school diploma; but I believe everyone deserves a second chance. While the many barriers to why students don't graduate still exist, our adult education program stands as a foundation to ensuring individuals are able to learn industry skills and be connected to opportunities of employment while earning an academic credential.

In the Spring of 2020, Isle of Wight County Schools Adult Education program launched its first IET Welding Program. Ten students enrolled in this ten-week learning program where they learn the fundamentals of welding from one of our Career and Technical Education teachers and are academically supported by faculty members from Isle of Wight. In this genesis cohort, two students did not have a high-school diploma and needed to obtain their GED® credentials— the learning framework in the design of the program allows this to be achieved.

With high anticipation from both students and staff, the first welding class began a month into the second school semester for the district. Just as any educational institution, students came in with a variety of welding and academic experience. Some had no experience in welding while others had previous experience but were seeking to earn a certification to aid in upward mobility as a professional. Collectively, they made our first welding class unique, as the spectrum of individuals would bring diverse perspectives to the group. The desire to become industry certified in welding meant different things to each of them but the true value of this learning experience is salient in the development of a particular skill and being connected to viable employment. Importantly, the academic journey of each student was accented in the two students preparing for their GED® credential.

As the national, mandatory quarantine measures took effect in March, school doors across the nation closed for two weeks. To help save countless lives, the decision to cancel physical attendance to learning institutions paused learning for most students in

Virginia and took a toll on our newly enrolled adult learners. The learners enrolled in GED® courses and the welding certification course grappled with the disjunction in their learning schedule and ultimately had a regressive response to the untimely changes.

The unprecedented move initiated a wave of school districts to pivot towards asynchronous, virtual learning—including ours. As a result, students are still recovering academically from the setback but are still on the path to GED® attainment and being certified. As COVID-19 uncovered resource disparities among our students, our adaptations required us to provide some of the students with laptops to access the online supplemental learning programs to continue learning.

While we all value efficient retention programs, there is much to be considered when educating adults who come from diverse backgrounds. With our adult education program, like many others offering a GED® program in conjunction with a professional certification, administrators must be diligent in understanding the needs of each learner. Our two students enrolled in both programs had difficulties completing assignments in the programs they less favored. For students like them, taking one step at a time promotes academic and professional success.

As we normally do in the adult education landscape, we look at data to inform how we teach and build relationships with our students. I vehemently recommend to other program managers that offer programs parallel to this design that they should identify and place students in respective programs based on their strengths and needs. I prescribe that if the student is stronger academically, then work on the GED® first to uplift the successes. Conversely, if the student has a skillset already in place for the certification program, then pursue the certification program first. Both are methods to help the student progress as well as appealing to the social emotional aspect of being motivated to complete each program. Be cognizant of the students' strengths, seek some success first, then take the next ⯆

Tawana Ford is Coordinator of Adult Education, Truancy, and UPLIFT in Isle of Wight County Schools. This is her third year as program manager and her twenty-ninth year as an educator. She LOVES seeing students enjoy learning and growing.

Why I'm Excited About #EdEquityVA
(and why you should be too!)

by Daquanna Harrison

On November 18th I had the honor of presenting to the Adult Education and Literacy ReMix Conference, on a topic that I and my company Elevation Educational Consulting Group (EECG) present on more and more frequently these days— Diversity. While in general I am happy to see more and more adult education professionals and programs focusing on diversity, I have also seen how it can be done in a way that burdens those of us from marginalized communities and/or done as a fad without any longer-term sustainability features. I can proudly say this is not the case for the majority of the leaders and professionals who took part in this great conference! While the work is not yet done, the educators of Virginia showed that they are ready and willing to do the work of #EdEquityVA for the students of Virginia's adult education system and I am happy that EECG was chosen to support these efforts!

Inequity in education has been a problem for generations and as adult educators we have seen how those inequities affect students for years, from those who did not finish school to those trying to enter the workforce or college but not able to meet the reading and math requirements though they graduated high school. Problems that affect people for so long are hard to solve. The problems of inequities in education are complex and intricate and the answers to these problems are often even more complex and intricate, yet there are some easy steps that those who are committed to change can take. Many of those steps I saw occurring in the leadership and the educators who organized and attended the conference. I hope that the following highlights inspire similar steps in other leaders and programs. It will take more than one keynote message to turn the tide for the diverse adult educators and students in Virginia but what I witnessed makes me optimistic and I hope you feel the same as you read about why I am excited about #EdEquityVA and why you should be too!

The Leadership

When I was contacted to be a keynote for the Adult Education and Literacy ReMix Conference, I was of course elated but was also worried that with diversity as the subject, often seen as divisive and felt personally, that the organizers of the conference would give so many parameters and '3r^d rails' not to touch that my address to the conference would be a whitewashed version of my true message. I readied myself for the meeting where I would be asked to make sure to only talk about diversity in certain terms or to avoid subjects that might 'sow division' or bring on White guilt…this meeting never happened! Instead, in a meeting that included State Coordinator Dr. Heidi Silver-Pacuilla, I was invited to, in fact, 'Bring My Whole Self'! I was told my opinions, expert analysis, and lived experiences were not only *enough*, but were wanted, honored, and respected. In this conversation, Dr. Silver-Pacuilla and Katherine Hansen of The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center at VCU did some very important steps that I want to highlight. In highlighting these steps, I hope to encourage Virginia's adult education leaders to continue this work and more so. Further, I hope to

provide other states', municipalities', schools', and programs' leadership with some guidance on how to support diversity in meaningful and sustainable ways.

They brought someone in who has an *expertise* in diversity.

In adult education we often look internally first and ask those within our programs to take on new and exciting projects, yet for diversity this is *not* the best way to go. When introducing diversity or starting up a new initiative like what Virginia is doing with the ReMix Conference, it is important to not put this heavy lift on your staff. Bringing in an outsider takes the pressure off of the staff who represent diversity or marginalized communities. Diversity work is emotionally challenging. I would compare it to the battlefield medicine scenes we see in movies where the doctors and nurses are running around quickly assessing the worst injuries, giving quick salves to those who they can easily treat while taking some time with those who are critical but knowing that without major help their status may never change. There's always a new patient coming in with a slightly different need. In these fictional scenes, the doctors and nurses are just a bit more stable than their patients and often later there are scenes of the doctors and nurses wiping their brows and discussing how hard it was but that they made it through. Now imagine if those doctors were being asked to also build the tents and the nurses had to also drive the tanks… this is what we are asking our staff when we ask them to take on our diversity initiatives without outside support. Not to mention that those from marginalized communities often have their own injuries they are mending! This is not to say you must have someone from the outside do all of the work, but at the very least you should have someone come in and get everyone on the same footing with vocabulary and overarching understanding of the major concepts. And yes, you will have to pay for these experts!

They showed that they would be *public* allies for the diversity work.

As I mentioned previously, I was ready to be told by leadership what not to say. I was ready to hear about what state regulations hampered them from what they 'really wanted to do' and which would in turn hamper me from being able to speak about certain needs of diverse communities. Instead, I was encouraged to push the attendees to think past the regulations and into what is needed for their students and programs. Even more important, the leaders did not just say, 'fine, say what you want', they were explicit that if I received any pushback from attendees that they were willing to jump in and use their power and privilege to support me. They knew the importance of their position and were not just willing to yield it in defense of diversity but made sure that they told me that this was their plan. They knew what they were asking of me could put me in the crosshairs of those who thought differently or those who, so used to the status quo, could try to derail the conversation. Being ready to use your privilege in whatever form, to support those who are helping you with your diversity initiative is a must. This work is hard. It is even harder, and will likely not succeed, if it is not publicly supported by leadership.

They already had the *vocabulary* of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

From the very beginning of our conversations, the leadership showed that they had done the work of studying and gaining knowledge about DEI and were well-versed in the work that they are spearheading. It is important that leadership have the minimum grasp of what they are asking of the subject matter expert they bring in. This allows the expert to focus on next steps and the needs of the larger community. As an expert, it is important to know where to begin and that you can safely leave the community knowing that they have others who can help guide them. Many DEI experts will not work with

organizations that do not already show a strong commitment to diversity in written form and through the work of the leadership. While my company, Elevation Educational Consulting Group, does not have this requirement, I see why this could be a helpful requirement. Having others at the table who you do not have to explain everything to allows the expert to redirect their energy to the larger community, expanding the experts' reach and impact.

The Educators

I purposefully conducted my keynote as an interactive workshop to allow for the educators to be able to begin to truly engage with the thoughts, ideas, and worries that would come up for them throughout the address. This was a bit of a gamble but I was sure the payout would be worth it at the end and the amazing educators of Virginia did not disappoint! The educators showed openness, true reflection, and vulnerability— all qualities much needed on the path to equity.

*They were **open** about their diversity efforts.*

The educators at the conference openly gave suggestions and asked questions about how they could better create a space where all students can feel welcomed and respected. From creating student success storybooks to positively approaching mistakes, the educators showed that they were doing the work of diversity in big and small ways. Oftentimes in settings discussing diversity, educators are cautious about saying what they are doing with the fear that they will be chastised or told they are not doing it right. These educators were proud of their work and knew that it was work that others would be encouraged by and their fellow educators showed their appreciation throughout the conference. Being open about our work is one step, but a more important step is having the support of others and the Virginia educators really showed their colleagues that they had their support!

*Their **reflections** showed the desire to grow and learn.*

Reflection is a major part of DEI work. Reflection can alter pathways and goals if done well. At EECG we include reflection in many of our workshops and consultancies to remind our clients that the work is not done in the workshop but is done internally. The results of the reflections often show us where a community is in their DEI efforts. As my team and I reviewed the reflections of the conference participants, it was clear that many of them were seeing where they needed to grow; but it went further in that many showed their willingness to take charge of their own growth. While I know this is only a sampling of the Virginia adult educators, I would say the majority are committed to the internal work needed to create equity in their classes and programs. The reflection was based on an identity that they do not think about often and asked, "How might not thinking of this identity affect your interactions with those who highly relate to that identity? We ask that you really reflect on this question and think about how it may affect aspects of your work relationships (to other staff or learners)." Here's a few of the answers that really showed the educators' willingness to reflect deeply even during this short keynote address.

Identity of Focus	Selected Responses
Sexual Orientation	• I may assume that people are not as affected by sexual orientation as athey may be because it is not something that has had a large impact on my life. • I might be negligent or make assumptions about other peoples' sexual orientation which could affect the conversations we have and the language I use...husband, wife, etc. • I could see where I might make some statements that assume that those around me are fine with their orientation as well. It might inadvertently cancel them in a way. Or I could focus on being sensitive to that in others.
Race/Ethnicity	• I must admit I do not understand how it feels to be discriminated against. However, I don't have to understand to feel compassion…I must be an active listener and believe a person when they express their feelings of hurt and frustration. And if I can't walk in their shoes, I can certainly walk beside them and support them. • With Black Lives Matter, racial thoughts have been on my mind more than ever. I have not thought that I acted differently toward races.
Education	• I take my access to education for granted at times, but it is a constant divider to my students who may have only a middle/ high school education. This is not only a barrier to keeping up with the class, but a place of great anxiety and challenge because we have other classmates who are very educated who seem worlds ahead of them, and that must be painful. I try to group them at times together so they know they aren't alone, but I have seen (especially at higher language levels) they quit. I think I need to address this feeling of being inadequate - unless I am projecting that on to them? Assuming? A place to be further explored.

I show these examples not to say that they are prefect reflections, but instead to lift up the space of uncertainty and complexity as a good space to be in. DEI asks that we question and challenge ourselves and others and that we assume a posture of lifelong learning.

So…Why Am I Excited About #EdEquityVA?

I am excited because starting with the leadership and through to the educators, you can see that Virginia's adult education system is making the right moves towards #EdEquityVA. For those in the Virginia programs and those looking from afar and wanting to follow their footsteps, here's a quick list of some steps to take:

1. Use Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) experts to get you started. One resource may be your state civil rights departments and organizations, as well as programs like the [Maryland Equity and Inclusion Leadership Program](#) from the University of Baltimore.

2. Be public about what you are doing and what you expect to be done for DEI. Be ready to show the world just how important this work is by using your status, privilege, and resources. A hashtag is one step but also doing the work publicly in a forum such as a conference really shows everyone that you are investing in this work.

3. Knowledge is key. As with all things, to do it well you must study, practice, and keep up-to-date. This goes for all in the community, but particularly our leaders must step up and be ready to guide and support the community. DEI and cultural competency demand that we stretch ourselves because by definition, they are not simply about your own experience but the collective and at times non-overlapping experiences of others.

4. Create a space where openness and risk are expected. There is no one-size-fits-all nor silver bullet to this work. Partic-

ularly in education where one student can change the norms of the class, it is important for there to be an expectation that teachers will be open about their hits and misses. If you are only seeing hits, then it is mostly likely that the misses are being hidden. Hidden misses are ticking bombs that could explode at any point and disrupt your DEI work. Misses and issues should be looked at, examined, and solved if progress is to occur.

5. Commit to reflecting at every level. Integrate the norms of DEI and cultural competency into work plans, classroom observation, data, and strategic plans. This will not only show your staff and others that this work is important, but also that they are expected to know what they did to move towards those norms. Reflecting in these ways pushes all a bit closer each time and reinforces that this is a lifelong learning process, not just a box to check.

Are you excited yet? If you are in Virginia, you certainly should be! I would love to hear from Virginia educators and others about how they are bringing to life #EdEquityVA. You can continue this conversation with me and others at EECG on LinkedIn and Facebook if you tag @Elevation Educational Consulting Group (look for the light teal, three-bar logo) and include #EdEquity or #EdEquityVA. 🔽

Daquanna Harrison's AE&L ReMix Plenary Session, *Bringing Your 'Whole Self', Discussions on Diversity in Adult Education*, can be viewed on the [conference website](#).

About Elevation Educational Consulting Group:

Elevation Educational Consulting Group (EECG) is a national consulting company focused on supporting education, workforce, and government entities through *technical assistance, curriculum development, professional training, and project and change managemen*t.

Our mission is to elevate the effectiveness of educators, workforce professionals, and organizations in the field of education. EECG devotes its energy to passionately supporting organizations of all sizes through customized supports and strength-based practices.

EECG also offers a dynamic suite of alternative educational programming, *Learning for the Future,* for youth-adults focused on career development and supplemental learning; available as stand-alone programs or supplements to established programming. *Learning for the Future* is based on the tenets of **Rigor, Social and Restorative Justice, and Technology**.

Contact EECG for training, leadership development, or other alternative/adult education technical assistance.

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About Daquanna

Daquanna Harrison *(She/Her) is the founder of Elevation Educational Consulting Group (www.ElevationEd.com) which works on projects within curriculum, trainings, technical assistance, SME, and program implementation; and provides customized supports and strength-based practices. Her primary focus is alternative and adult education.*

Her skills include:

- *evaluating and creating curriculum and learning tools;*
- *developing, implementing, and managing educational programs;*
- *data analysis; and*
- *diversity, leadership, and teacher training.*

Currently President of MAACCE Board of Directors (www.MAACCEMD.org), on the T.E.A.C.H advisory board with NBCDI (www.NBCDI.org), and on the XPRIZE Connect Advisory Board supporting youth diversity in STEM.

She is an alumna of Howard, American, Duke, and the University of Baltimore's Equity and Inclusion Leadership Program and graduate of the Education Policy Fellowship Program from the Institute for Educational Leadership. Proudly from the Gullah Islands of SC, she resides in Prince George, Maryland where she was recognized as 40 Under 40 for Excellence in Education.

From the VDOE

Equity VA

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT ♥F EDUCATION

OFFICE OF EQUITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recognizes that education is our most effective tool to reduce poverty, address racism, and sustain economic advancement for all Virginians. The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that students and families in Virginia, regardless of their race, economic status, or the languages they speak at home, feel welcomed in their schools. There has been significant work over the past year at the VDOE and through the Board of Education to put actions toward this responsibility, including the establishment of an Office of Equity and Community Engagement at the VDOE.

EdEquityVA is defined as VDOE's commitment to eliminating the predictability of student outcomes based on race, gender, zip code, ability, socio-economic status, and/or languages spoken at home. Virginia has developed a clear vision of education equity, which includes establishing and reporting on measurable goals that support closing student achievement gaps and advancing academic rigor for all students and requires that students have access to high-quality learning programs that enable them to maximize their potential.

The Office of Equity and Community Engagement leads these statewide efforts and is strategically focused on the following priorities:

1. Increasing the cultural competency of Virginia's educator workforce

2. Eliminating disproportionality in student outcome data

3. Closing opportunity gaps among marginalized student groups

The Office of Equity and Community Engagement initiated the annual Mary Peake Award to recognize leaders in the area of equity; the first awards were announced in December during the inaugural EdEquityVA Week. This award is named for an adult educator! Mary Peake taught free and enslaved Black children and adults in the Hampton Roads area before and during the Civil War. Learn more about this founding mother of adult literacy.

Adult education has a unique role in the advancement of educational equity in communities in Virginia. Adult education practitioners should be proud of the work that we do to serve the most vulnerable families in our communities; to provide opportunities for adults to improve their academic, English language, and vocational skills; and to help parents be more involved in the education of their children. We serve an extraordinarily diverse student population and help our students achieve a wide variety of goals. We help close achievement and opportunity gaps. And there is so much more that we can do.

The priorities articulated by the Office of Equity and Community Engagement cannot be left to words alone. We need to support and invest in teachers and programs in order to build our capacity and change our mindsets to address these priorities. The articles in this newsletter and the professional development opportunities offered by the VDOE and VALRC are meant to inspire, educate, and energize us to question our current practices; find ways to listen to our students' voices; and ensure that opportunities are equitably available to – and more importantly, accessed by – all students.

Actions that each of us can take to affirm our commitment to addressing EdEquityVA include:

- Attending workshops, webinars, and learning events that build our cultural competence.

- Joining a professional learning community, a peer group, or online community to engage in deeper learning and dialogue on the issue of equity.

- Examining our student outcome data and instructional practices with an equity mindset to determine actions that can generate positive change.

- Developing our outreach and recruitment practices with an equity mindset to make sure that all students and community groups are aware of and understand the opportunities that are available to them and that underrepresented groups are actively recruited.

- Creating opportunities for students to voice their perspectives and engage in solutions to these challenges.

We look forward to working with adult education practitioners across Virginia to address educational equity and increase outcomes for all of our students and communities. Stay tuned to EdEquityVA for resources, announcements, and learning events on this topic.

Join us for the next AE&L Conference ReMix Plenary Session!

January 13, 2021 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Make Remote Learning Engaging for Students by Focusing on Project-Based Learning

Jorge Valuenza, Lifelong Learning Defined

Jorge Valenzuela is an education coach, author, and advocate. He has years of experience as a classroom and online teacher, a curriculum specialist, and a consultant. His work focuses on improving teacher preparation in project-based learning, computational thinking and computer science integration, STEM education, and equity-based restorative practices. Jorge is an adjunct professor at Old Dominion University, lead coach at Lifelong Learning Defined, and a PBLWorks national trainer. His book Rev Up Robotics: Real-World Computational Thinking in the K–8 Classroom is available from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

Register at www.aelconference.com.

Culturally Responsive Practice Resources

The VALRC is currently curating resources for the Culturally Responsive Practice section of our website. Here is a taste of what you will find. If you have a suggestion or a tool that you have found useful in your practice, please share with us by sending an email to vdesk@vcu.edu.

Resources for Educators

- Coming Soon: "Becoming an Antiracist Educator" (register to stay informed about the details) (VCU)

- How to Root Out Anti-Black Racism From Your School (Education Week)

- Column: White people don't understand the trauma of viral police-killing videos (PBS News Hour)

- George Floyd, Racism and Law Enforcement Guide (Anti-Defamation League)

- Preparing to Discuss Race and Police Violence in the Classroom (DCPS)

- Teaching About Race, Racism and Police Violence (Teaching Tolerance)

- Teaching about Racism, Violence, Inequity and the Criminal Justice System (Anti-Defamation League)

- Let's Talk About Racism in Schools (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)

- Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism and other Difficult Topics with Students (Teaching Tolerance)

- Social Identities and Systems of Oppression (The National Museum of African American history & Culture)

- Talking About Race (The National Museum of African American history & Culture)

- Anti-bias Curriculum Guides (Anti-Defamation League)

- Books Matter (Anti-Defamation League)

- How Should I Talk about Race in my Mostly White Classroom (Anti-Defamation League)

- Teaching Materials (Scholars for Social Justice)

- Inclusive Excellence Toolkit (Campus Compact for New Hampshire)

- Resources (National Equity Project)

- Positive Deviance Guides (Positive Devience Collaborative)

- The 4th Box (Center for Story-based Strategy)

- Understanding Culture and Diversity in Building Communities (The Community Tool Box)

- Teaching Diverse Learners (IES)

- A look at microaggressions and implicit bias (Edutopia)

Resources for Students

- [Know Your Rights](#) (ACLU)
- [Speaking Up](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- [Surviving & Resisting Hate: A Toolkit For People of Color](#) (IC Race Lab)
- [26 Ways to Be in the Struggle Beyond the Streets](#) (Beyond the Streets)

Organizations to Follow

- [ADL](#): Anti-bias resources for educators, parents, and families
- [EduColor](#): A place where the voices of public school advocates of color on educational equity and justice are elevated
- [Project Lit Community](#): Literacy movement empowering students, teachers, readers, and leaders to bring diverse perspectives into literature in schools
- [Teaching Tolerance:](#) Free resources for schools and educators to help educate children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy
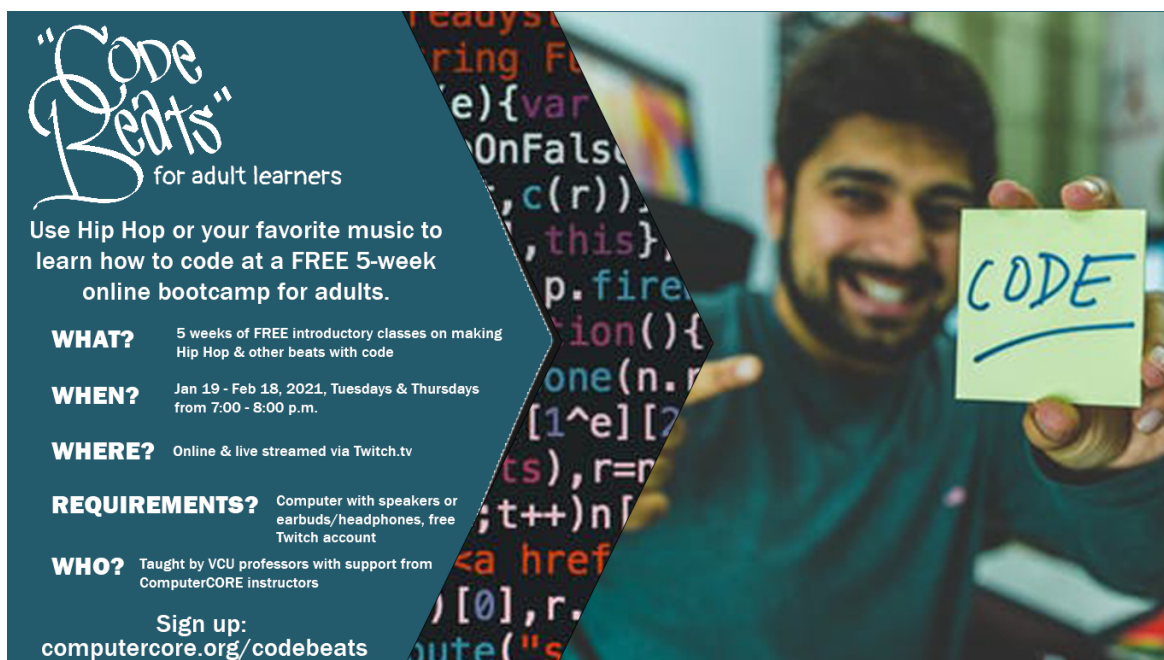
Aggregate Sites

- [Anti-Racist Resource Guide](#)
- [Antiracist Resources](#) (Educators for Anti-Racism)
- [Fundamentals](#) (Racial Equity Tools)
- [Inclusive Teaching](#) (University of Michigan)

Books

- [Anti-racist books](#)
- [White Fragility 4-part book review](#)
- [How to be an Antiracist book discussion](#)
- [Me and White Supremacy workbook](#)
- [Books about race and black liberation](#)
- [Racial healing books](#)
- [Social justice book list](#)

Other categories include videos, podcasts, webinars, courses, curricula, articles, websites, books on abolitionist teaching, historical books on the Black experience in America, and resources for parents. While some of these resources may be geared towards K-12, many of the strategies and ideas presented can be applied to adult education.

2021 PROGRESS CALENDAR

JAN

4 Registration for VALRC Winter Term Online Courses opens

11 Program Managers Webinar (1:30-3:00 p.m.)

12-13 Virgina Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Professional Development and Leadership Seminar
Virtual

13 Adult Education and Litearacy Conference ReMix Plenary Session: Incorporating Digital Literacy & Blended Learning
Virtual
(1:00-4:00 p.m.)

14 IDEAL 101: Foundations of Distance Education and Blended Learning begins

19-FEB 18 Code Beats for Adult Learners Coding Camp
Virtual

21 VALRC Winter Term Online Courses Begin

Foundations of Reading: Print Skills
(6 weeks)
Runs: 1/21/21-3/3/21

Numeracy Practices for Adult Instruction
(6 Weeks)
Runs: 1/21/21-3/3/21

Beyond Basics: Multilevel ESOL Classes
(6 Weeks)
Runs 1/21/21-3/3/21

Developing Writing Skills in Adults
(8 weeks)
Runs: 1/21/21-3/17/21

26-29 Future of Education Technology Conference
A free interactive online event

MAR

15 Program Managers Webinar
(1:30-3:00 p.m.)

24-27 TESOL 2021 International Convention and English Language Expo
Virtual

APR

19–21 Adult Education and Literacy Conference ReMix Plenary Sesson: Showcase
Virtual

POSTPONED

SETESOL
Richmond, VA
Moved to fall 2022

National Centers for Families Learning (NCFL) Conference
Dalllas, TX
Moved to October 25-27, 2021

GED® Annual Conference
Atlanta, GA
Moved to summer 2021

Correction Education Association (CEA) Conference
Austin, TX
Moved to August 2021

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**Please note that The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center will be closed for the holiday beginning Monday, December 21, 2020 until Monday, January 4, 2021. Please leave a message with any of our specialists at vdesk@vcu.edu or by phone 804-828-6521/800-237-0178 if you wish to be contacted. We will get back to you as soon as possible. We wish you a healthy and enjoyable holiday season. We look forward to a brand new year of working together for Virginia's adult learners!