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# Motivation & Persistence in Adult Education

by Betsy C. Mathias

*“What’s in it for me?”*

That’s a question we ask ourselves when we are choosing to take an action or not. It’s not a selfish question—it’s a process of weighing pros and cons, determining if the benefits of action are greater than the potential challenges or sacrifices. Our motivation comes from our answer to this question.

So what motivates our adult students to enroll and participate in the instructional services we offer? During registration, our students list goals such as learning English, getting a GED® credential, getting a better job, helping their families. As they spend time in class and build relationships and trust with their teachers and peers, they cite more specific, personal goals. They talk about how they want to improve their lives and feel better about themselves. They provide us an opportunity to identify their needs and support the pursuit of their goals. They evaluate how our instructional services will make their situation better. “What’s in it for me?” they ask.

What motivates our staff – instructional and support – to do what they do? What’s in it for our teachers, our aides, our volunteers to stay involved in adult education? In most cases, the answer revolves around helping others. As educators, we like to solve riddles. We like to identify a need, try different approaches to address that need, and enjoy the moment when that need has been successfully met. It doesn’t have to be a big success, at least by our own measure, but it is a time when our student understands that learning leads to achieving personal goals. We say that the student has succeeded but we have also succeeded as part of the process. It motivates us to keep doing what we do, waiting for the joy that comes when another student need is identified and met. We receive personal satisfaction when we witness the results of our efforts, as instructors, as counselors, as friends. It’s why we do what we do. It’s what’s in it for us.

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# PROGRESS

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## A Few Words on **PROGRESS**

Dear **PROGRESS** reader,

You have probably noticed some changes to Virginia's adult education and literacy newsletter! Thanks to Karen Ballengee, Assistant Instructional Technology Specialist at the Resource Center, **PROGRESS** has an updated look and feel. (To read more about Karen and other newer faces at VALRC, see page 15.) We have also worked to make the newsletter more accessible; the printable **PROGRESS** PDFs on our website should be friendly to screen reading software and e-readers.

You can also expect to be seeing **PROGRESS** more often (some issues may be shorter than in previous years)—look for our next issue in April! You may see Virginia Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education staff become more frequent contributors; some discussions that might once have appeared in *First Mondays* will migrate here. The primary mission of **PROGRESS** remains providing information that is relevant, valuable, and useful to adult educators of all levels: tutors, teachers, staff, and managers. If you have article ideas or feedback about **PROGRESS**, please contact me at hmajor@vcu.edu.

This issue focuses on motivation and persistence. Longtime adult education champion and recently retired program manager Betsy Mathias challenges us to think like students as well as educators when we ask the question: "What's in it for me?" State staff share baseline data from 2016-2017 and then investigate how we can move forward, setting data-informed goals and encouraging students to persist in making measurable skill gains. Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Andjela Kaur writes about how motivational interviewing (MI) can encourage adult learners to meet their goals. Southside's Mora da Silva writes about her teaching journey to create lifelong readers, and the benefits that can come when instructors give students the opportunity to persist and complete classroom novels. I hope you will find a motivating spark that helps inspire you as you continue to work for **progress** in our classrooms, programs, and communities.

Sincerely,

Hillary Major

*VALRC Instructional Standards and Communications Specialist*

# Building Skills with Classroom Novels

by Mora da Silva

The idea of using novels in the ABE/ GED® classroom hit me in early 2014 as I came to know my passing students, who unanimously read for pleasure at home. Because at that time it took a 450 to pass any of the GED® subtests, it seemed only these, the most proficient readers, were going to make it; the others, well ... what to do with the others? So I began a personal teaching journey to discover how I could create life-long readers in my classes and how novels and short stories could be a part of this. A few years later I became lead teacher for Regions 13 and 14, and I now support instructors in the use of novels, short stories, and other longer texts in classroom book circles. The outcomes: students who participate in book circles show a permanent increase in reading scores and fluency. These students also show improved oral language skills, a love of reading, awareness of great literature, and transformed perspectives.

At the beginning of this project, of course, I needed low-cost, good books. Once I started looking, many opportunities arose. I needed texts to be not only free or low-cost, but also very interesting, available at various levels, and, where possible, connected to GED® social studies and science content (historical fiction works well for this). I mostly looked to First Book for low-cost and free titles through our local literacy organization, an approved member. [First Book](#) is now an eVA-approved vendor, but a literacy organization must also become an approved buyer through a registration process. I also found public-domain short stories through online research and discovered Logos Instructional Services' [110 Great Short Stories](#) with side-by-side

annotation organizers on the Teachers Pay Teachers website. [AwesomeStories](#) has long, interesting texts related to historic and science content. I recently purchased multiple copies of low-cost award-winning books through my daughter's elementary school's Scholastic Book Fair online program. Teachers, too, can go to [Scholastic's warehouse](#) sales.

The very first title I used in classes came from a case of books supplied by First Book and donated by our local literacy organization. [Breaking Through](#) is the memoir of a Mexican immigrant, Francisco Jimenex, who was the first person in his family to go to college. It is written at about a 750 Lexile level (grade level equivalency 4.9) and has 208 pages. On day one, I said to the class: "We are going to read this book." I asked for volunteers to read aloud. Then I said, "So, do you want to read some more at home?" (Put control in the hands of the students.)

"Well, I don't know if I'll have time."

"I can try. I don't know if I'll be able to read at home ..."

I said, "How about two chapters by next class, and we'll talk?" I gave each student a piece of paper to fold into sections. One section was for page numbers and difficult words. Another section was for page numbers of confusing parts. Another section was for page numbers of interesting parts. I recommend using stems from any part of this [metacognitive bookmark](#). Although I chose the first few books, later, as I collected more titles, I could give the students choice over what book to read.

I knew it was important to understand how to choose books that students would and could read. When possible, I used a leveling system, such as Lexile Leveling or the [ATOS analyzer](#), to match books to readers' TABE scores. I have created a [list of Lexile to TABE correlations](#). At first, it is best to choose books that are at or slightly below students' independent reading level.

The endurance needed to read even a short  
*Continued on p. 4>>>*

## ***Students who participate in book circles show a permanent increase in reading scores and fluency.***



book has to be developed over time. Teachers should model and guide students in using comprehension techniques at their independent reading level (where students are able to read at least 90-95% of the words accurately) before increasing the difficulty level of the reading. Additionally, teachers should consider the audience: how familiar is the subject matter and genre? have students read books of this length before? How much prior knowledge is necessary to understand the text? As an example, we have a large Amish population in our area, so the novel *A World Away* (5.0) was intriguing to all our students. Fantasy and science fiction were less popular. For excellent information on choosing books, I recommend the article "[Designing Courses Using Books](#)" by Glenda Phipps.

Equally important, I knew, would be effective questioning strategies. This proved relatively simple, since once a book gets started, questions that align with the CCRS reading anchors and GED® assessment targets usually come up naturally. I usually concentrated my questions on these elements: vocabulary, character, events/plot, climax, conflict, resolution, point of view, purpose, setting, theme, tone, figurative language, organizing ideas, drawing conclusions, making inferences, and evaluating evidence. Some novels allow reflections on connections between different social studies elements (people, events, places, processes). Often a quick internet search would provide ample study questions for a particular text, especially for award-winning and classic books. I recognized that as

students added more novels to their reading logs, comparisons could be made between the texts. Activities could be developed around the books; for example, Jeanne Bendicks' *Archimedes and the Door to Science* (5-8) can accompany multiple engrossing science demonstrations.

For a quick introduction to engaging learners in reading a longer text, use a [Directed Reading Thinking Activity \(DRTA\)](#); DRTA explicitly activates prior knowledge and creates meaningful stopping points for discussion. A simple summarizing graphic organizer that one of our teachers is using with her lower-skilled students is called the [Somebody Wanted But So Then](#). For teachers who like to structure classes thematically, possibilities are endless. The subject of time travel in the short story "A Sound of Thunder" by Ray Bradbury (6.0), for example, segues nicely into study of GED® earth science target ES.c.3: age of the earth, radiometrics, fossils, and landforms. Another option is teaching with movies. There are quite a few novels that have been turned into films. Watching the film version and making comparisons has been a culminating event in several classes. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (7.4) and *A Raisin in the Sun* (6.8) are two examples of book-to-film adaptations our instructors and I have used.

With preparation, novels make small grouping and evidence-based reading and writing uncomplicated. As Glenda Phipps states in "Designing Courses Using Books," "When a teacher designs courses around books, discrete and sequential skill work is less likely to dominate classroom time. Skill work is an important part of instruction, but it can be integrated, for the most part, into real occasions for reading, writing, and speaking.

## ***With preparation, novels make small grouping and evidence-based reading and writing uncomplicated.***

The inclusion of whole books in the curriculum gives meaningful direction to classroom planning and activities. Students want to talk about the ideas in the books. Teachers can then use books as a way to organize instruction." James Cannon reminds us in "[What is Guided Reading?](#)" that guided reading is not round-robin or popcorn reading; everyone is reading in guided reading, if whisper reading or reading silently.

The instructor is there to scaffold learning. As I read each book, I kept next to me a copy of [Text Dependent Question Stems and Frames Aligned to College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standards](#) handout and at each chapter wrote down a few questions for discussion. Often, I would type up a few of these questions to give to students so they could write their answers. Questions can be given to a group or pair to answer while the instructor works with another group/pair. At the minimum, I made sure to have a 20-30 minute discussion about the reading once a week. As a student from one of our classes said, "It was a good way to get to know each other. I got to know people's names and their personalities from what we talked about." I found attendance to be good in classes with book circles. Discussion became the carrot for coming to class.

Many teachers are apprehensive about initiating reading for homework. I have a few suggestions. When a new student enters the class, I would caution instructors to start with an easy short story and very little to no reading assigned at home. The same with novels: start with short easy reading in class with no assigned home reading. I never mention to new students that books will be read in the class, as this would unlock dread in some

students, who might not return. Luckily, this attitude usually changes. Take, for instance, this quote from a student in one of our classes who recently finished *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*: "I don't like to read, so I would never finish a book on my own. I like to read out loud and listen to people read."

Students reading aloud can aid instruction. One of our instructors using Carl Hiasen's *Hoot* said of her students, "They want to read aloud in class. This works for us as we are working on fluency and word attack. This way I can help them with phrasing or 'scooping.' I can also see what words they are mispronouncing and get them to break them into syllables and use context clues for the meanings. They enjoy the humor and informal conversations in the book and enjoy laughing together about the book."

Some teachers have had success with students reading most of the books in class, both orally and silently. This sometimes leads to a shift in students' thinking, where they complain it is going too slow, and they beg to take the book home ... that is exactly where we want them! A teacher told me the story of a student who was finally allowed to take the book home, and she finished it in two days. Upon returning to class, she didn't mind rereading passages. Her instructor said, "She is fine with rereading sections of it to work on oral reading fluency [and] word attack and then answering questions. She is working on an ongoing summary that she brings in each class for me to proofread and go over with her."

Teachers who have not participated in book circles often ask, "With sporadic attendance, how can we finish a book?" I recommend waiting until one has a core group. Then start. Most of the time, at first, when I had a core group of attending students, I would choose the book to read. We'd start it in class with a preview—looking at the covers, reading any information on the back, reviewing the table of contents, and quickly skimming. Then I'd

*Continued on p. 6>>>*

***A teacher told me the story of a student who was finally allowed to take the book home, and finished it in two days. Upon returning to class, she didn't mind re-reading passages.***

ask for volunteers to read aloud, or I might start the book, then ask for volunteers to read. We'd read a chapter in class. Then I'd ask, "How many chapters are in the book? We should have this finished in about a month. How many chapters do we need to read each week?" It usually came to about 2-3 chapters per week. Not much. This way we were reading three books per semester. Later, as my library grew, I allowed student groups to choose the book.

The discussion, more than anything, is the reward. If a student had not finished the reading, I would not react punitively but allow the student to take the first half of class to read silently. These students, at first, have no habit of reading at home, so it takes time to build this foundation.

Another strategy to use with lower-level students is to offer an audio version of the book to read along. First Book sells "Play-away" portable audiobooks, which allow a student to change the narration speed, for several titles. Another option is to read short stories and make use of the narration option in accessibility tools. The [Claro ScanPen](#) is a smartphone app used to scan hard text and convert to a narrative form.

Some of my higher level students were harder to pin down (for discussions) as they would read a novel in a weekend, then ask for one more, and one more. One of my students read a 1000+ page novel! I had to politely ask another to please stop reading in class as he needed to get his math done.

Beginner readers, those learning to read, clearly need phonics-based texts with controlled vocabulary. Once students get to a second grade level, they are reading to learn, and appropriately chosen interesting whole texts can nurture a love of reading and expedite progress. Occasionally a student will ask to keep a book because of the personal transformation the book fostered. That's when we know we've won.



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#### **Additional Recommended Resources**

["Learning to Love Reading"](#) by Donna Earl (*Focus on Basics*, May 1997)

[Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers](#) by Dorothy S. Strickland, Kathy Ganske, and Joanne K. Monroe (Stenhouse, 2000)

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*Mora da Silva holds an M.Ed. in reading education from the University of Virginia and has served as executive director of the Charlotte Adult Learning Center. Mora has been an adult education instructor for seven years and currently acts as a lead teacher in Southside Virginia Community College's adult basic education programs.*

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# A Look at the 2016-2017 Virginia Adult Education Performance Data

by Heidi Silver-Pacuilla and Thomas Suh

The data is in for 2016-2017! This and future columns in the **PROGRESS** newsletter will examine the Virginia adult education performance data and raise questions for us to consider as practitioners.

As you read about the statewide reports and percentages, ask whether these represent your class and program. Chances are that they do not. The Commonwealth has regional distinctions that we see in our adult education programs. Talk to your colleagues and leaders about the data from your program. Whom do you serve? Which groups are making consistent gains? Can you help more people in your region achieve their goals?

## Enrollment

In 2016-2017, we reported 19,208 students who had 12 hours or more of instruction (“participants” according to the National Reporting System [NRS]). This total enrollment figure is down from 20,221 in 2015-2016 and from 20,598 in 2014-2015. Why do you think enrollment is on the decline?

## Program Type

Figure 1 shows the percentage of participants in each program type, adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a second language (ESL). This chart shows that the largest number of students is served in our ESL programs. Do these percentages reflect your program’s population? If not, what would your pie chart look like?

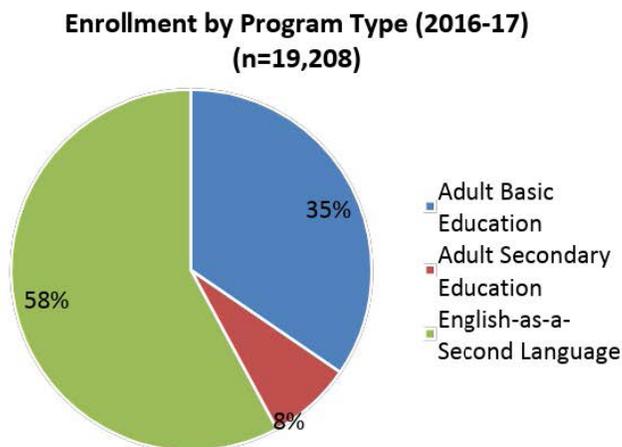


Figure 1

**Figure 1:**  
*Enrollment by Program Type.*  
How to read this chart: Thirty-five percent of participants in program year 2016-2017 were served in adult basic education classes, seven percent were served in adult secondary education classes, and 58 percent were served in English as a second language classes.

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## Age

Figure 2 shows the percentage of participants in each age category, clearly demonstrating that the majority of participants served are of working age.

**Enrollment by Age (2016-17) (n=19,208)**

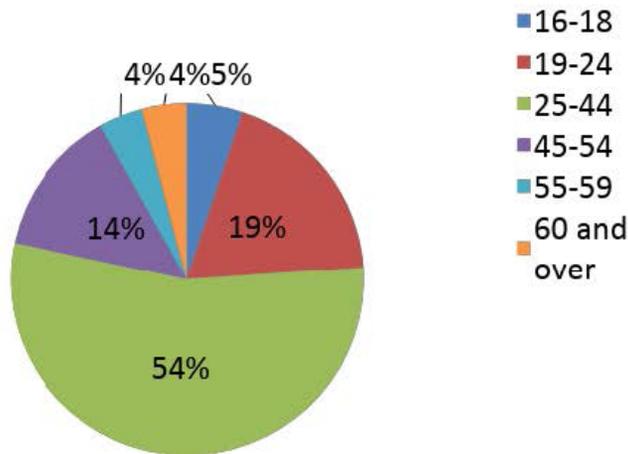


Figure 2

## Employment Status

Figure 3 shows the percentage of participants by their self-reported employment status at intake. It includes four status categories. The “unemployed for 27 or more weeks” category is a new category and represents a barrier to unemployment defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): long-term unemployed. How does this chart reflect or diverge from the economic realities in your program area?

**Enrollment by Employment Status (2016-17) (n=19,208)**

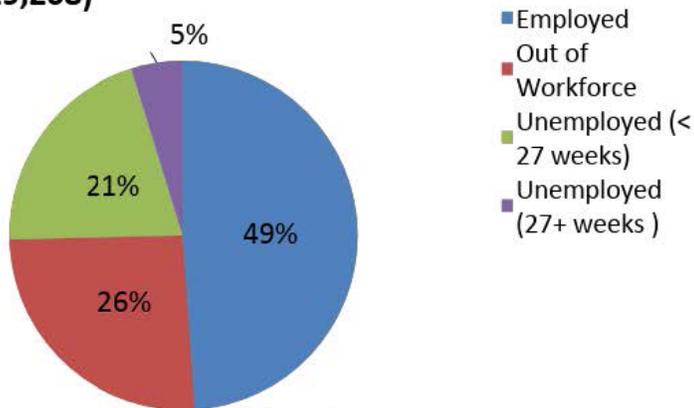


Figure 3

**Figure 2:**

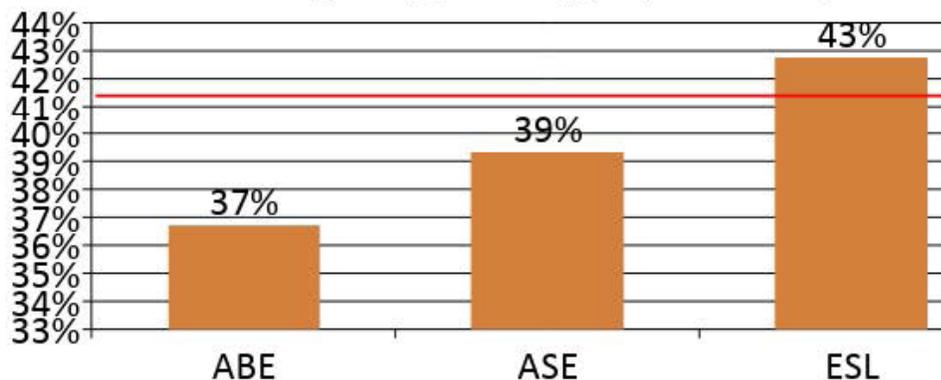
*Enrollment by Age. How to read this chart: Five percent of participants were ages 16-18 at intake, 19 percent were ages 19-24, 54 percent were ages 25-44, 14 percent were ages 45-54, 4 percent were ages 55-59, and 4 percent were age 60 or over.*

**Figure 3:**

*Enrollment by Employment Status. How to read this chart: Forty-nine percent of participants reported that they were employed at intake, 26 percent reported that they were out of the workforce, 21 percent reported that they were unemployed less than 27 weeks, and 5 percent reported that they were unemployed 27 or more weeks.*

**Figure 4:**  
*Measurable Skill Gain Attainment by Program Type.*  
 How to read this chart: Thirty-seven percent of participants who entered an adult education program at the ABE level demonstrated an MSG, 39 percent of participants at the ASE level demonstrated an MSG, and 43 percent of participants at the ESL level demonstrated an MSG.

## NRS Measurable Skill Gain Attainment Rate by Program Type (2016-17)



### Performance

Figure 4 displays measurable skill gain (MSG) attainment by program type. The red horizontal line is set at 42 percent. That is our statewide performance target, set in negotiations with the federal Department of Education and published in the Combined State Plan. This chart shows that only the ESL program overall achieved the statewide target; ABE and ASE performance were well below target. What were the performance percentages reported by your class or program last year? How could you raise performance levels? What are factors that prevent students from demonstrating progress – and how can we address them?

Watch for future columns that disaggregate this data further and delve more deeply into regional differences. We look forward to working together to find ways to use data for program improvement.




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*Heidi Silver-Pacuilla is Adult Education Coordinator at the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Thomas Suh is the Adult Education Data Collection, Reporting, and Accountability Specialist at VDOE.*

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# Using Motivational Interviewing in Adult Education

by Andjela Kaur



***Motivational interviewing has repeatedly been proven to be a counseling method that leads to better commitment to treatment (showing up for the next scheduled appointment).***

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**M**otivational interviewing (MI) is a form of empathic dialogue for strengthening a person's motivation and commitment to change. It is designed to strengthen an individual's motivation for movement toward a specific goal by eliciting and exploring their reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion. This well-researched tool is proven to increase motivation and persistence of people who are struggling to set goals and/or achieve them. In 2012, Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning (RIRAL) trained all its admissions and career counseling staff to conduct MI-based interventions; after six months, the staff reported increased satisfaction with the process of admissions and counseling. The students also reported that they felt heard and understood during the admission process.

Motivational interviewing has been successfully used as an ongoing intervention for increasing and maintaining motivation for change of a behavior. It was originally introduced in the 1980s in the field of substance abuse, where it has repeatedly been proven to be a counseling method that leads to better commitment to treatment (showing up for the next scheduled appointment) and a decrease in the likelihood of relapse. In the field of adult education, MI can be used both in admissions and as an ongoing classroom strategy for increasing persistence and influencing students' motivation to achieve their goals.

For those interested in learning more about the model, the best starting point is to take a basic motivational interviewing training, which is best delivered as a 16-hour training over a

period of time. Although training styles vary, the training requirements are standardized and each participant is expected to achieve the following: a) understanding and practice of the spirit and principles of MI ; b) understanding and practice of MI skills; c) understanding and practice of skills to strengthen a person's change language and develop commitment language. If this training is focused on a particular team or department within an organization, it is likely that, in addition to meeting these requirements, the group will come closer together and that the members will develop stronger interpersonal relationships based on empathy and patience for each other.

Since the initial basic MI training, RIRAL's staff has used the method in various ways within the agency; many staff have changed positions, but they always brought MI with them to the next post. After leaving my job at RIRAL in order to pursue doctoral studies, I have had the privilege to train many organizations in this method, and have witnessed teachers, counselors and administrators feel better about their jobs once they have added this valuable tool to their bag of professional tricks. 

## VALRC Explores Motivational Interviewing

by Joanne Huebner

Motivational interviewing training is a component of the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services' Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities grant. I participated in the first round of training with the goal of evaluating the model and determining its potential for adult education. Motivational interviewing is a tool that opens the door for building the self-efficacy adult learners often lack. Self-efficacy is critical to supporting motivation to learn, especially in the classroom setting. I thought having specific and detailed conversations about change was a great strategy for adult learners, particularly if these conversations occur consistently across the various support agency supports that an adult learner may encounter. 

*Joanne Huebner manages the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and serves as Interim Co-Director of The Literacy Institute at VCU.*

## TEAL Course Highlights Motivation

Motivational interviewing is a strategy that originates in the world of counseling. There are also a multitude of instructional strategies and approaches that can foster student motivation; the TEAL online training courses focus on several of these: Self-regulated Learning; Universal Design for Learning; and Student-centered Learning: Keys to Motivation and Persistence. TEAL courses are free, last three weeks with about two hours of work per week, and are co-led by facilitators with math and writing expertise. For TEAL course start dates, see the **PROGRESS** calendar, or find [registration information](#) online.

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*Andjela Kaur is a motivational interviewing trainer and practitioner who specializes in using motivational interviewing in workforce development and adult education programs. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts, where she is studying political economy of vocational rehabilitation with a focus on workforce development professions. Andjela is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and has worked as a rehabilitation counselor in the fields of mental health, substance abuse, and student advising; as a teacher in adult education, vocational education, and higher education; and as an administrator of workforce development programs.*

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# Setting and Achieving Goals: The Role of Assessment

by Heidi Silver-Pacuilla and Thomas Suh

**M**any of us set New Year's resolutions to lose weight, exercise more, eat more greens, call our mothers more regularly, or learn a new skill. All of these resolutions stem from a motivation to improve something – our habits, our health, our relationships, or our resume. Setting the goal and articulating it to family and friends is an important first step to reinforce that motivation and activate a support system. Acting on the goal and tracking incremental progress are equally important and reinforcing. If you made a resolution, how are you tracking your progress? How does progress feel? Is your support network cheering you on?

Students enter our programs with the drives of motivation and determination. They've acted on their goals and often have shared them with their families and friends. We hope our classrooms and programs reinforce students' motivation and persistence. Other articles in this edition of **PROGRESS** focus on motivating adult education staff as well as learners, describe an interviewing technique to help increase student motivation, and demonstrate how giving students the opportunity to persist in reading longer texts can build skills and transform attitudes. This article looks at the role assessment data can play in reinforcing motivation and supporting progress.

## Tracking Educational Progress

As you know, every new student must be administered a pre-test upon registration. The scores on the pre-test plus the information shared about availability, goals, and interests during intake help the program identify an appropriate instructional level and schedule for each student. The assessment score sets a baseline against which to track educational progress. It can make the incoming level of performance visible to both the student and the teacher and help students understand

their placement and how to pace themselves to undertake the work required to achieve their goals.

Standards-based instruction (SBI) in the classroom makes the learning visible to the students on a daily basis. SBI makes explicit the standards being taught, relates individual lessons to a larger unit, and engages students in formative, classroom-based assessments on the content and concepts that are learned within that unit. As students persist in attendance and engage in their learning, they can "see" their progress, but that can be hard to quantify or share with their support network.

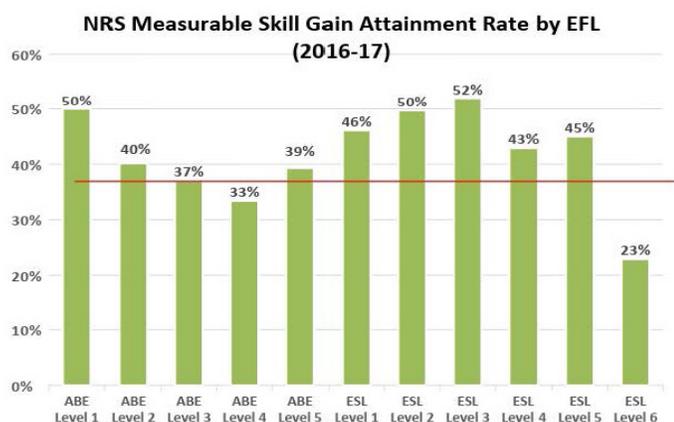
Post-testing as soon as it is appropriate (required length of instructional time between pre- and post-test depends upon the assessment your program is using) provides students with a more tangible indicator of progress. Post-testing demonstrates whether the instruction has been effective for the learners or whether adjustments should be made, and whether students are ready to advance.

**Did you know? It is [Virginia Assessment Policy](#) to post-test 70% of all participating students.**

## Tracking Progress at the State Level

The aggregate statewide performance rate, called Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), is reported to the Virginia Board of Workforce Development as progress toward the goals of the [2016 WIOA State Plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia](#) and to the federal Department of Education in the end-of-year performance report. For program year 2016-2017, the target overall MSG rate for adult education was set in negotiation with the federal Department of Education at 42 percent. Virginia reported a statewide MSG attainment rate of 40 percent, two points below the target. For program year 2017-2018, the current program year, the target overall MSG rate for adult education was set at 43 percent.

The following chart shows the statewide performance of participants grouped by Educational Functioning Level (EFL) for the total enrollment of 19,208 students; the red horizontal line is set at the 42 percent target attainment rate. Participants in some EFLs exceeded that target (ABE Level 1, ESL Levels 1-5), but participants in other EFLs fell below the target level of performance (ABE Levels 2-5, ESL Level 6). While this chart includes the performance of all participants, whether they had received a post-test or not, it does not indicate the enrollment within each EFL, which impacts the overall performance average for the state.



**How to read this chart:** Adult education MSG attainment in program year 2016-2017 is charted by educational functioning levels (EFL). The red horizontal line at 42 percent represents the negotiated statewide target, published in the 2016 WIOA State Plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The highest attainment rate, 52 percent, is shown in ESL Level 3.

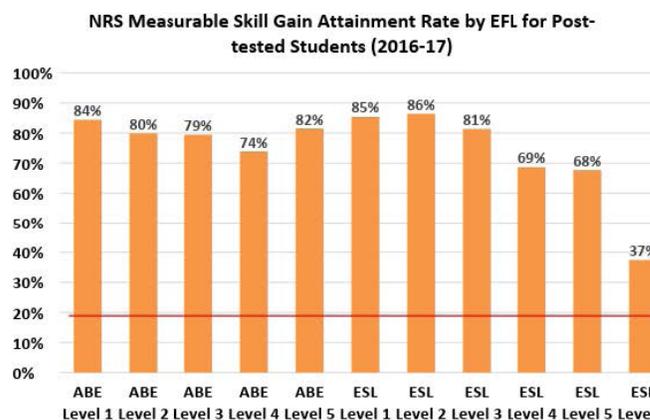
As we looked at the statewide performance data from 2016-2017, we noticed that many programs could be doing more to capture post-test data. Only 10,450 of our total 19,208 students were post-tested in 2016-2017. This represents a 54 percent post-test rate, well below the state policy requirement of 70 percent. What the MSG attainment rate for post-tested students demonstrates is that when students persist in instruction and are post-tested, they show remarkable gains. The following chart shows the statewide performance by EFL for the 10,450 students who took a post-test. The MSG rates are well above the 42 percent target in all but one EFL.

What factors play into students receiving a post-test? Given the high MSG attainment

rate of post-tested students, the quality of instruction of adult education providers appears to be strong. However, the stop-out rate prior to post-testing is concerning. Retention and regular attendance are necessary for students to accrue enough instructional hours to be eligible to post-test. Program and classroom policies and practices that track instructional hours and arrange for post-testing as soon as appropriate are also necessary.

### What Can You Do?

Discuss with colleagues and students the role post-test data can play in supporting motivation and persistence. What do students



**How to read this chart:** Adult education MSG attainment in program year 2016-2017 is charted by educational functioning levels (EFL) for 10,450 students for whom a pre- and post-test were recorded. The red horizontal line at 42 percent represents the negotiated statewide target, published in the 2016 WIOA State Plan for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The highest rate of gain, 86 percent, is shown for ESL Level 2.

need to know about assessment data to help them understand their progress?

Become informed about the post-test rate in your program and region and how your program is implementing the related policies and delivering engaging instruction. Set a goal, share it with others, take a baseline measurement, and start tracking progress toward achieving a higher MSG for your students, class, region, and the state!



*Heidi Silver-Pacuilla is Adult Education Coordinator at the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Thomas Suh is the Adult Education Data Collection, Reporting, and Accountability Specialist at VDOE.*

# A Roadmap for Standards-based Instruction

by Hillary Major

**A**t the VAACE Conference in November 2017, I joined George Bailey from the Virginia Department of Education in unveiling “Implementing Standards-based Instruction in Virginia: A Technical Assistance Roadmap,” a multi-page guide for Virginia adult educators that includes information and resources to support implementation efforts in the areas of program design, instruction, and professional development. As we move toward the state goal of full implementation of standards-based instruction (SBI) by July 2019, it is important for stakeholders (teachers, managers, state staff, partners) to have a common definition of “full implementation.” The technical assistance roadmap begins with and is grounded in this definition:

*Full implementation of standards-based instruction means that all adult education programs are prepared to deliver instruction aligned to and addressing all levels of state-adopted instructional standards. Standards-based instruction demonstrates College and Career Readiness key advances and meets the expectations set by the core actions of the Standards-in-Action observation tools. Organizational leadership, policies, and practices support the conditions necessary for the effective and sustainable implementation of standards-based instruction to maximize student learning in adult education classrooms across the Commonwealth.*

Crucially, this definition emphasizes that the *how* of SBI implementation is just as important (or even more important) than the *what* of the specific content being covered. That’s why “action” is so central to the Standards-in-Action observation tools, helping educators focus on creating learning experiences where, for instance, “all or most students actively participate in the lesson through class

discussions and activities, group projects, etc., instead of doing solitary seatwork or listening to extended lectures” and instructors consistently expect “evidence and precision from students” and ask them “to elaborate on and justify their answers.” Some of the indicators on the observation tools are familiar reminders of general good teaching practice while others specifically reflect college and career readiness advances; nevertheless, putting these actions into practice represents a cultural shift for many programs and staff

Fortunately, there are many supports and technical assistance opportunities available to Virginia educators, and the roadmap provides an overview of current offerings as well as those that are in development. You can find the roadmap online at the [VALRC website](#). Along with a printable PDF, the website links to a six-minute video that introduces the roadmap and its key elements. The roadmap is designed to be a convenient reference, with “quick links” to the standards documents and observation tools and answers to frequently asked questions. As our SBI journey continues and more resources become available, our roadmap will be updated. We hope it will be a valuable guide along the way to full implementation for our programs and 21st century success for our learners. 

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*Hillary Major is Instructional Standards and Communications Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.*

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## VALRC Welcomes New Staff

The Resource Center is pleased to welcome three recent hires who join us in our mission to help support adult educators.

### ▼ KAREN BALLENGEE

*Assistant Instructional Technology Specialist*

**Karen Ballengee** holds an M.Ed. in instructional technology and a certificate in graphic design. She recently retired from the U.S. Army, where she served as a clarinet player, performing music in 18 states and 23 countries. As Assistant Instructional Technology Specialist, Karen works to improve the accessibility of VALRC resources, creates graphics, and assists with the website and technology projects.

### ▼ TONY RYALS

*Workforce Support Specialist*

**Tony Ryals** hails from Goldsboro, NC, and holds an M.Ed. from Lesley University in Massachusetts and an Ed.S. from Liberty University. He has taught for the Boston Public School System, served as a nonprofit program director, worked as a job coach for students with disabilities, and taught GED® classes in a faith-based setting. As Workforce Support Specialist, Tony supports efforts toward workforce preparation and integrated education and training; he is also coordinating planning for the summer Adult Education and Literacy Conference.

### ▼ SUSAN WATSON

*ESOL Specialist*

**Susan Watson** is a familiar face to many Virginia adult educators, having taught ESOL for Prince William County Schools Adult Education Program and Northern Virginia Community College Workforce Development Division. Susan holds an M.Ed. in adult literacy, a TESL graduate certificate, and Virginia ESOL certification; she is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Virginia Commonwealth University. She succeeds Nancy Faux as ESOL Specialist, coordinating professional development for ESOL teachers that aligns with state and federal initiatives as well as teacher interests and needs.



# Motivation and Persistence in Adult Education

<<<continued from p.1

Motivation within our program has a different measure. What's in it for me as a program manager to build, maintain, and share a successful program? Intrinsically, I want to help people, but the resources I use are different from those of my staff. I must take a big picture approach. If I want to help people reach their goals, I need to build a foundation of resources to assist them. Strategic plans, budgets, data, partnerships – all those business terms support the foundation of our adult education program. What's in it for me? I can blend the details with the big picture and see that qualitatively and quantitatively, I am making a difference in people's lives.

Motivation comes from within. Our students choose to participate when they feel that they can individually benefit. Our teachers choose to contribute when they feel they can make a difference, improve someone's situation in life. As a program manager, I choose to support a program that I feel is making a positive impact in our community. But how do you keep the motivation alive? How do you make sure that benefits exceed challenges or sacrifices?

Persistence keeps motivation alive. Persistence involves teamwork, sharing joys and setbacks. Persistence is hard work because it requires us to constantly reevaluate whether the benefits of our actions outweigh the challenges and obstacles. As adult educators, we have the opportunity to guide, support, and challenge our students to persist in pursuing their goals. The real work is theirs to be done, but we can help them along their journeys. Their personal motivation led them to us and our professional motivation encourages us to help them persist towards their goals. Yes, there will be challenges – skill deficiency, transportation, childcare, negative relationships – but if we collectively remember what

motivated us to start this partnership and process initially, then persistence can follow.

In the end, through all our collective efforts, we are changing lives. What a wonderful profession to be a part of.



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*Betsy Mathias recently retired as Regional Program Manager of Rappahannock Area Regional Adult Education. She has been a leader in adult education for 30 years and serves as treasurer for the Virginia Association of Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE).*

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# 2018 PROGRESS CALENDAR

## FEBRUARY

**26** Using the CCR Observation Tool for English Language Learners VALRC Webinar

**26** Differentiated Instruction TEAL Online Course Begins  
[tinyurl.com/teal2018](http://tinyurl.com/teal2018)



## MARCH

**2-6** Teaching Academic Writing to English Language Learners LINC'S Webinar & Discussion  
[tinyurl.com/lincswebMar18](http://tinyurl.com/lincswebMar18)

**3-23** Registration for VALRC Spring Online Courses  
[www.valrc.org](http://www.valrc.org)

**19** Self-regulated Learning TEAL Online Course Begins  
[tinyurl.com/teal2018](http://tinyurl.com/teal2018)

**27-30** TESOL International Convention Chicago, IL  
[www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)

## APRIL

**2** VALRC Spring Online Courses Begin  
[www.valrc.org](http://www.valrc.org)

**9** Formative Assessment TEAL Online Course Begins  
[tinyurl.com/teal2018](http://tinyurl.com/teal2018)

**25-28** NCTM Annual Meeting (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) Washington, D.C.  
<http://www.nctm.org>

**30** Universal Design for Learning TEAL Online Course Begins  
[tinyurl.com/teal2018](http://tinyurl.com/teal2018)

## MAY

**21** Student-centered Learning TEAL Online Course Begins  
[tinyurl.com/teal2018](http://tinyurl.com/teal2018)

## JUNE

**11** Deeper Learning Through Questioning TEAL Online Course Begins  
[tinyurl.com/teal2018](http://tinyurl.com/teal2018)

## JULY

**17-20** Adult Education and Literacy Conference Williamsburg, VA

