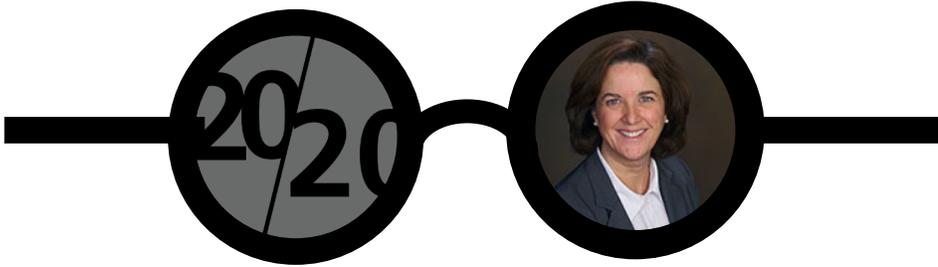


Bridging the Vision

with Joanne Huebner



Adult Education Never Lost Focus



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[/'fökəs]

NOUN

1. a point at which rays (as of light, heat, or sound) meet after being reflected or bent.
2. the point at which an image is formed.

In September of last year, I suggested that we seize the paradigm of 20/20 vision to guide us into the new decade. Now, most people want to forget 2020 ever existed. But not adult educators. You have used this time of uncertainty and lack of toilet paper to focus like a laser beam on your work and on your learners. You never lost sight of what you value most.

If there is one thing this pandemic brought into sharp focus, it is the pending need to strengthen workforce skills as nearly half a million people in Virginia seek re-employment. I believe we stand at the ready. Dr. Kate Daly Rolander, VALRC Workforce Specialist, comments, "In Virginia, adult education providers are quickly adapting to the new virtual realities of

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PROGRESS

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delivering integrated education and training and continuing to support learners” by “strengthening of essential workforce skills, including flexibility, time management, critical thinking, and greater experience with technology as a vehicle for learning and communicating.” Dr. Carol Bausell provides one example of this tenacity on page 3 where she shares how stackable credentials, achieved through distance learning, can provide a lifeline for English language learners. Her story is punctuated by both Micayla Burrows and Hali Dayberry who discuss the value of teaching digital literacy skills to low-literacy learners: “The technologies of our modern world present many opportunities to adult ELLs to participate more fully in their community,” says Ms. Burrows. The long-awaited *Virginia Common Access Portal* was launched during this time, too, (see story page 12) providing an opportunity for individuals to navigate their own workforce path forward.

While the pandemic catapulted us into a focus on digital literacy, our programs have also been ever mindful of maintaining meaningful instruction when working with those with limited or no access to technology. Elizabeth Severson-Irby shares a blog post by Daniel Stanford on page 14, [*Videoconferencing Alternatives: How Low-Bandwidth Teaching Will Save Us All*](#). Mr. Stanford shares how educators should consider the drawbacks that come with “high-bandwidth/high-immediacy tools” when designing instruction. Dr. Nan Carmack reminds us of the important role of Virginia’s public libraries, which are committed to community success in her article *Libraries are for Everyone!* on page 25.

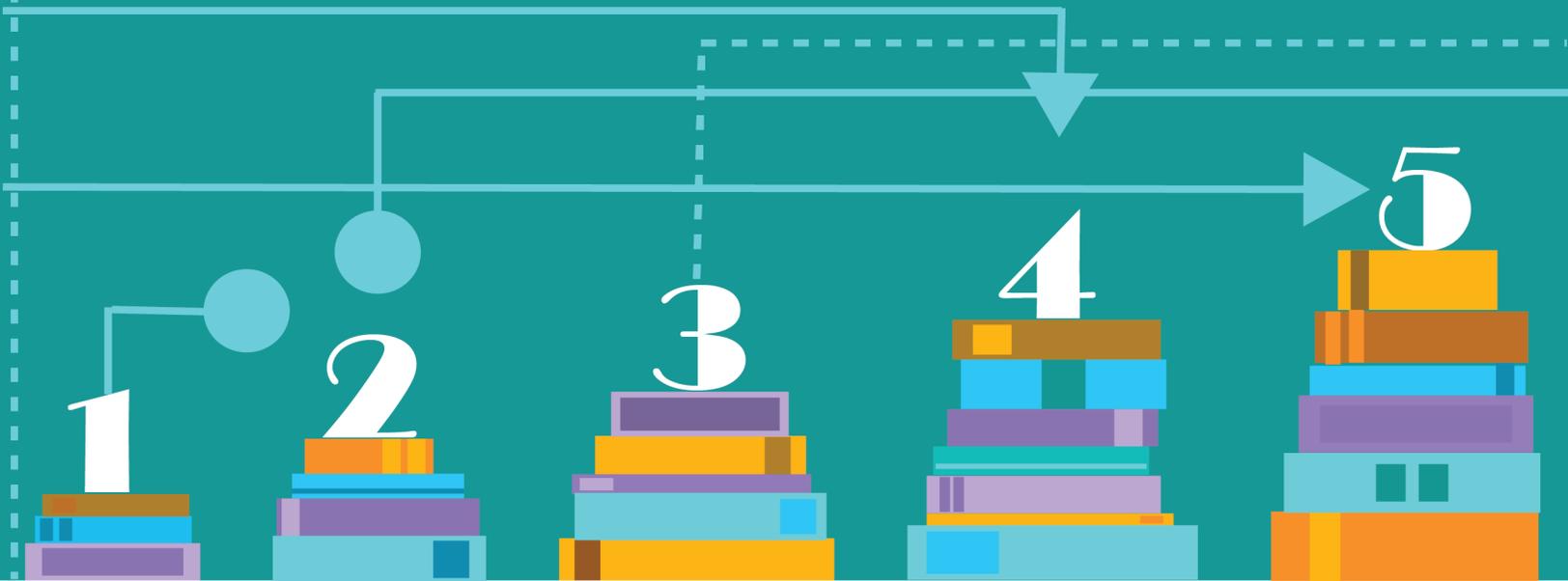
Donna Walker James, in her article *Meeting the Challenge of On-line Learning Disparity of Adult Learners*, page 16, sums up our collective 2020 experience well: “All our staff, volunteer teachers and students have learned so much during these trying times. Now all the students will remember—with all the tech-savvy people in the world—the days and months when they first used Zoom! Our biggest lesson: being brave and flexible.”

And, I might add, never lose focus—because it is only by bending that an image is formed. 

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.



VCU



Stackable Credentials:

A Story of Innovation Emerging from Adversity

by Dr. Carole Bausell

Every year [Literacy Council of Northern Virginia \(LCNV\)](#) attends the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Conference. We learn how others address challenges similar to our own and bring back a slew of creative ideas. We try to share some of our homemade innovations as well.

This year's conference, *Vision for the Future*, took place in Harrisonburg in February. Ashley King, Admissions Manager and Registrar, joined me for a terrific institute on blended learning by World Education's Dr. Jen Vanek. Little did we know that in less than a month's time, we would need those distance learning strategies to reinvent our entire course catalogue!

My presentation, *Stackable Credentials that Propel Beginning English Learners along Career Pathways: Partnership Development that Leads to Innovation*, delivered on behalf of co-authors Executive Director Roopal Saran and Manager of Instructional Design Soo Park, described why we developed our own stackable credential as a bridge to an industry-recognized credential. On that Wednesday afternoon, I looked around at the interesting group assembled in my assigned conference room and remembered the many excellent presentations that had shaped my own thinking in the past. I felt like I was standing on the backs of giants.

Stackable credentials are "...part of a sequence of credentials accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualification to help them move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to potentially different and higher paying jobs," I began¹. Since most of our learners do not have unlimited time to learn English well enough to get a job, providing stepping

Stackable Credentials are "part of a sequence of credentials accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualification to help them move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to potentially different and higher paying jobs."

stones along a career pathway can become a lifeline. Each stepping stone or stackable credential shows potential employers job-relevant skills. Each inspires the confidence to pursue the next one. Each advances English skills in the context of occupational skills.

Next, I expounded upon the value of the Integrated Education and Training (IET) teaching paradigm to those trying to secure a foothold in the workforce. An English teacher and occupational trainer team up to prepare students to earn a nationally known credential, in our case [Guest Service Gold® \(GSG\) in customer service](#). Given the plethora of hospitality jobs in our area, GSG propels learners ahead. And since customer service is very much part of the American workforce culture, we have been able to make the content relevant to an even wider swath of the workforce beyond hospitality. Best of all, LCNV students have an overall pass rate exceeding 70% on the credentialing exam at course's end.

But what about those without sufficient English to access an IET course? We encountered that problem when a partner convinced us to offer the course to a cohort of day laborers. Paradoxically, most lacked the language skills to pass the very credential-bearing course they most needed. They shared these circumstances: (1) beginning-level English, (2) linguistically isolated households, (3) incomplete schooling in their native languages, and (4) poverty status. Do we bar these students from our IET?

We stood at the crossroads—hopelessness in one direction, innovation in the other. Could we afford to make the pathway to credentials so long and arduous that those who need them most couldn't attain them? In the end, we created a stackable credential—in effect, a bridge course for those with the greatest barriers. LCNV's *Foundations of Customer Service* was designed to prepare students for the higher-level Guest Service Gold®. We also forged a partnership with Cell-Ed to offer our content through their mobile-learning solution. That

was our innovation. Thus, in addition to classroom learning, students could opt to obtain the stackable credential via distance learning.

I think of this story as having three themes. The first regards the frustration one feels when faced with insurmountable barriers. The second pertains to offering someone a leg up (in the form of a stackable credential) to reach their goals. And the third relates to innovation springing from adversity (distance learning).

But allow me to digress briefly to reminisce about my childhood tree-climbing aspirations. I still remember peering longingly up into the branches of a tall tree. There were no footholds that I could access and my heart sank. But then my father, my hero, emerged out of nowhere and offered me a leg-up. How many times in life have I been offered and taken advantage of a leg-up? Too many to count.

As I relayed to my colleagues that day, this presentation is truly an example of innovation emerging out of adversity. Now, less than a year later, we find ourselves in uncharted territory—a global pandemic. Once again we aim to serve the needs of all of our learners, regardless of their circumstances. Perhaps there will be a story in it about innovation for next year's conference. I hope so. 📌

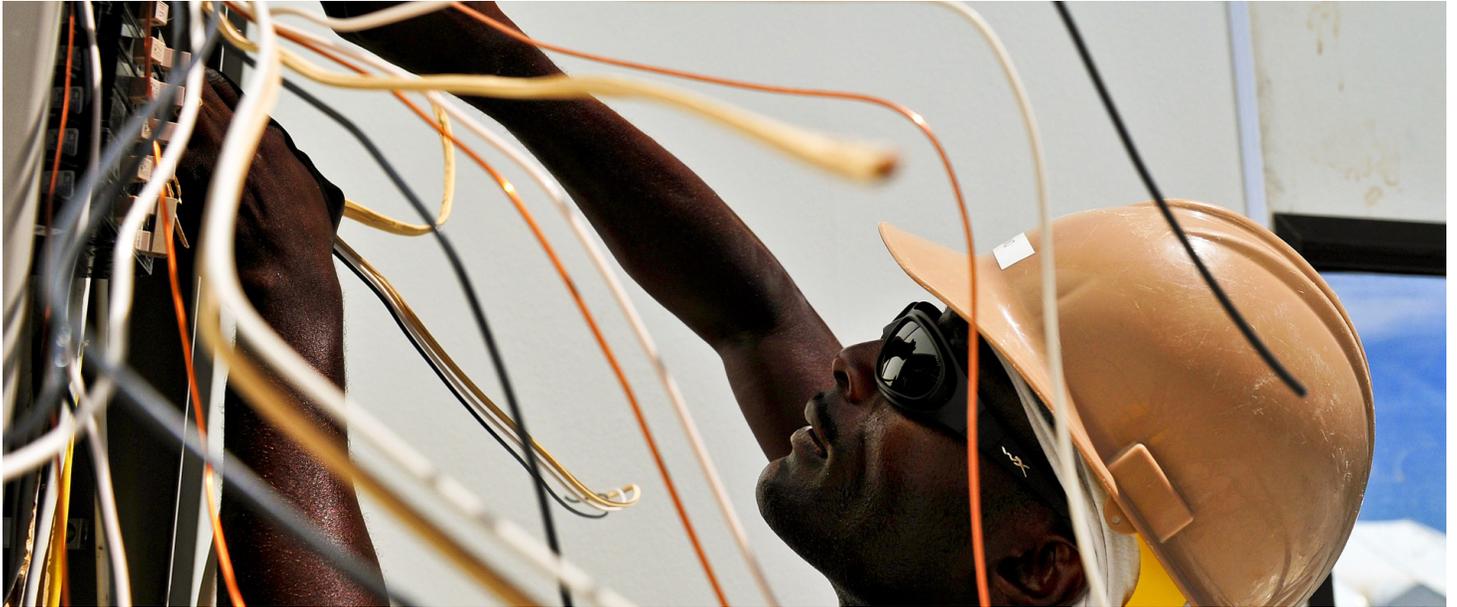


Dr. Carole Vinograd Bausell, Director of Academic and Student Affairs, holds a doctorate in education from Johns Hopkins, a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) from Cambridge, a Certificat d'Etudes Supérieures from the Sorbonne, and a Governor's Award for her work with torture survivors seeking asylum in the U.S. She has served in a variety of leadership, editorial, research, and teaching positions and was appointed to an outcomes roundtable for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Bausell led randomized controlled trials in learning, the results of which formed the basis for her series of books known as "The Bausell Home Learning Guides".

¹Naughton, J. (2018, November 12). 5 things you should know about stackable credentials. *Credentialing Insights, Institute for Credentialing Excellence*. <https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/blog/5-things-you-should-know-about-stackable-credentials>.

by Debby Hopkins

“Learning more about modern apprenticeship and how you can incorporate this workforce strategy into your efforts is well worth your time.”



APPRENTICESHIP: WHY IT'S A GREAT WORKFORCE STRATEGY

When you consider how to pursue careers in health care, cyber security, financial services, or law, does an apprenticeship option cross your mind? A December 2019 article in the *New York Times*, "[Want a White-Collar Career Without College Debt? Become an Apprentice](#)", is a clear indicator of the re-imagining happening with this centuries old training model.

President Obama in his [2015 State of the Union address](#) said, "*Tonight, I'm asking more businesses...to offer more...apprenticeships—opportunities that give workers the chance to earn higher-paying jobs even if they don't have a higher education.*" Later that year, the

federal government made an historic, unprecedented investment of \$175 million to expand apprenticeship. Federal investments continued approaching \$1 billion to evolve our workforce system so it provides an inclusive pipeline of candidates with the skills businesses need through apprenticeship, a proven training model. Over 700,000 apprentices have begun careers through apprenticeship in traditional construction and skilled trades as well as in health care, financial services, law, and information technology. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 laid the foundation for incorporating apprenticeship into the workforce system, and the enormous investment of federal grants has fueled the initiative.

As author of the team's grant proposal and project director of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board's (SVWDB) Valley to Virginia (V2V) American Apprenticeship Grant, awarded in the first round of \$175M apprenticeship funding, I've spent much of the last five years exploring various methodologies and advocating on a state and national level for apprenticeship as a workforce strategy. Informed by my previous career as a private industry executive in human resources, I believe that a well-designed apprenticeship program and collaboration with partners who bring value to the table are helping reduce the gap between what our education and workforce system is producing, and what businesses need to thrive.

To understand why apprenticeship is an effective workforce strategy, a practical overview of the model and some misconceptions is critical. First, without an employer, there is no apprenticeship—this is a common misunderstanding. An individual becomes an apprentice when their employer enrolls them into their apprenticeship program, a training plan they designed to meet specific workforce needs in their company and industry. The vast majority of apprenticeship programs in Virginia are registered—they meet government standards including occupation-specific education, paid on-the-job training under the supervision of a mentor, and a wage increase plan approved by the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry Division of Registered Apprenticeship. A registered apprentice is an employee gaining expertise in an occupation through a company's structured apprenticeship program, who upon completion, will become a Journeyman or Journeyworker, earning an internationally recognized credential for proficiency in an occupation, not just one skill as received in an industry certification.

Apprenticeship is a proven workforce strategy gaining traction in education and workforce systems as more and more businesses embrace the apprenticeship model to build their own skilled workforce, and more education and workforce partners begin incorporating apprenticeship into their processes and systems.

A great example of a high school apprenticeship is the [Western Virginia Water Authority's Water/Wastewater Technician apprenticeship](#). Students can begin at age 16 and if schedules permit, complete their apprenticeship by end of high school or age 18 having earned over \$50,000, gained important industry credentials, with a great career path and no college debt.

Collaboration with education and workforce partners at the onset of developing an apprenticeship program will improve the successful outcomes for all parties and programs. The SVWDB, Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center, and a federal DARS/DBVI Grant (Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities) has worked to develop a pre-apprenticeship program for entry manufacturing apprenticeships. Participants have been co-enrolled in WIOA Title I, Adult and Youth, and WIOA Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation, in addition to the V2V Grant providing extensive resources to support participants in employment, apprenticeship, and retention to complete apprenticeship programs and earn family-supporting wages.

Learning more about modern apprenticeship and how you can incorporate this workforce strategy into your efforts is well worth your time. Check out the resources on the next page. 



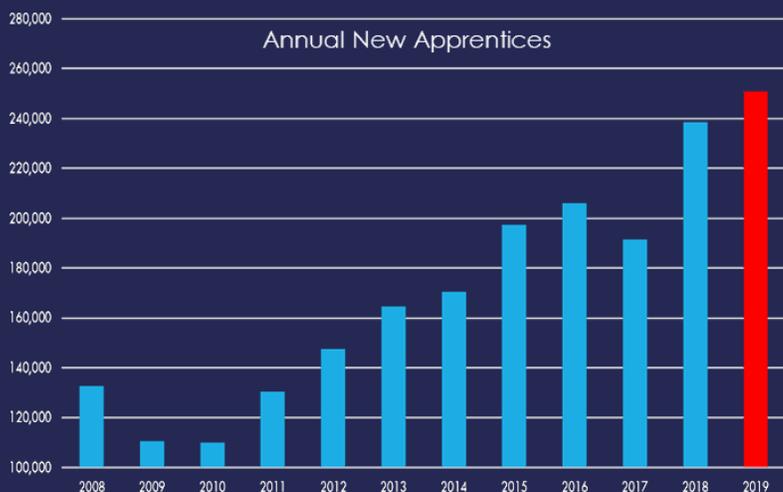
Debby Hopkins is the Chief Workforce Officer and Program Director for the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board. She has over 10 years of workforce development experience managing federal workforce grant programs and collaborating with business, education, and other workforce partners to help solve regional talent pipeline challenges. Debby was awarded the Virginia Community College's (VCCS) "Expanding Opportunities" award in December 2016 and her work was recently highlighted in VIRGINIA BUSINESS, September 2019—"Hershey Boot Camps"—and in HR MAGAZINE, Spring 2019—"Closing the gap: How education, training, and legislation can help bridge the skills divide."

128%

Growth in New Apprentices Since 2009

Key Facts

- 705,000+ new apprentices since 1/1/17
- 38% more active apprentices than the previous 10-year average (633,000 vs. 459,000)
- 319,000+ participants completed an apprenticeship in the last five years
- 12,300+ new apprenticeship programs created in last five years



Retrieved on 06/26/20 from https://www.doleta.gov/oa/data_statistics2019.cfm

Apprentices and Participation Trends

- In FY 2019, more than 252,000 individuals nationwide entered the apprenticeship system.
- Nationwide, there were over 633,000 apprentices obtaining the skills they need to succeed while earning the wages they need to build financial security.
- 81,000 apprentices graduated from the apprenticeship system in FY 2019.

Apprenticeship Sponsors and Trends

- There were nearly 25,000 registered apprenticeship programs active across the nation.
- 3,133 new apprenticeship programs were established nationwide in FY 2019, representing a 128% growth from 2009 levels.

RESOURCES

Apprenticeship.gov

[Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) is a one-stop source to connect career seekers, employers, and education partners with apprenticeship resources. Learn more about apprenticeships across industries, how to establish a program, and access open apprenticeship jobs.

More About Apprenticeship

[Presidential Executive Order Expanding Apprenticeships in America](#)

[LINCS Discussion on Pre-Apprenticeship Programming](#)

Department of Labor & Industry

[Department of Labor and Industry, Division of Registered Apprenticeship](#)

Includes list of companies with apprenticeships, apprenticeship occupations, training providers, and agency representatives.

[US Department of Labor Apprenticeship Toolkit](#)

Resources and Strategies for Delivering Workforce Preparation Activities at a Distance

by Kate Daly Rolander, Ph.D.



In a shifting and uncertain economic landscape, it is especially important now to emphasize workforce preparation as a core offering of adult education programs that do the important work of meeting learners where they are and supporting their transition to a rapidly changing workforce. As many classes and training programs transition to distance learning models, workforce preparation activities become increasingly important to support learners as they become more independent, self-directed, and confident in distance education, training, and work. Workforce preparation activities, as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), refer to skills and competencies that are not only useful in the workplace, but are also fundamental life skills that include critical thinking, digital skills, self-management, working with others, and understanding information and systems. Workforce preparation is not solely about integrating occupational content into academic instruction; it involves adapting instructional practice to mirror the expectations of the workplace such as working in groups, solving problems, locating information, and using technology to learn and communicate.

In this article, we'll address how these skills can be incorporated into adult education offerings by contextualizing academic content and by incorporating instructional strategies that encourage the use of these skills, such as project-based learning, problem-solving activities, and group work. First, we'll introduce the IET Blueprint, a resource developed by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center to support all aspects of integrated education and training (IET) delivery, including workforce preparation activities. Next, we'll highlight resources for designing instruction to facilitate the development and practice of workforce skills, as well as content that may be used for integrating workforce content into academic instruction. We'll end by highlighting innovative developments for delivering this kind of skills instruction at a distance.

Virginia's [IET Blueprint](#)

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center developed the IET Blueprint to support adult education practitioners in

PROGRESS June 2020

the planning and delivery of workforce preparation activities and in an effort to create a technical assistance one-stop-shop for Virginia's Integrated Education and Training (IET) instructional planning and delivery. The extensive blueprint website compiles resources and state data for planning and delivering IET programming, including [instructional resources](#) for integrating workforce readiness skills into academic instruction. There is also a [printable resource](#) that includes instructional resources for all aspects of an IET, technical assistance information, a glossary of terms, and sample responses for the [IET Planning Tool](#). Visit the site to explore the programs in Virginia that are offering IET and IELCE programs and discover the resources and technical assistance available to support all phases of IET programming.

Instructional Strategies for Workforce Preparation

Below is a selection of ready-to-use resources and evidence-based instructional strategies for integrating and contextualizing instruction, two important components of delivering engaging workforce preparation activities in adult education programs.

I-BEST, Washington State Board for Community and Technical College

(I-BEST, Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training.)

[I-BEST Team Teaching Models](#)

Team teaching is an integral part of the I-BEST model. It includes joint course planning and an instructional overlap of at least 50 percent of the class time. Overlapping instruction is a core component of the I-BEST model.

While effective team teaching techniques and skills are vital to I-BEST success, they are rare among faculty and administrators.

On this page, you'll find six research-based strategies, evidence-based theory, video samples of effective instruction, and curricula samples. The resources in this section can function as a self-directed learning module or as the basis for group instruction.

[I-BEST Co-Teaching Videos](#)

These four videos show demonstrations of six approaches to co-teaching and collaboration. These instructional strategies can be used to support and strengthen collaboration between occupational and academic instructors in the classroom and at a distance for a more aligned and integrated education and training experience.



National College Transition Network (NCTN) [Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE & ESOL Classroom: Curriculum Guide](#)

The Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE & ESOL Classroom curriculum is a ready-to-use, flexible curriculum that prepares adult educators to incorporate career awareness and planning into their instructional and counseling activities. The lessons and handouts can be adapted for a range of students and skill levels.

[Employability Skills Framework](#)

Perkins Collaborative Resource Network, U.S. Department of Education

The Employability Skills Framework is a freely available tool that was created to support the development of essential personal and interpersonal skills necessary for individuals to be college and career ready. The Employability Skills Lesson Planning Checklist may be downloaded to support the integration of workforce preparation into academic instruction. The nine general employability skills are broken down into the checklist so that they are easily incorporated into a lesson.

[Illinois Statewide Career Pathways Contextualized Basic Skills Curriculum and Resources](#)

Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)
Illinois' Statewide Basic Skills Curriculum combines adult education academics with the skills needed in the workplace through contextualized instruction. The instruction includes a combination of identified workplace competencies, career exploration, and basic skills presented in an occupational context.

[ICCB Model Curricula](#)

The site features an IELCE Toolkit; healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics curricula; as well as a career pathways curriculum guide for ABE/ASE learners.

Workforce Preparation Content Resources

These resources include content and skills practice to support learners' continuing development of essential soft skills, digital skills, and job readiness skills.

[GCF Learn Free](#)

The lessons on this site can be used with learners to support career planning, to apply for jobs, to balance work and life, to practice basic computer and tablet skills, to learn about online safety, and to complete training needed to succeed in today's marketplace. The site includes a teacher's guide.

[Career OneStop's Video Library](#)

The Career OneStop Video Library includes videos and video tutorials about a wide range of aspects of workforce preparation from career exploration to job training to the application process. On this site, learners can learn about fields in high demand; take an assessment; research job options; make a career plan; learn about education and training opportunities; locate certifications; search job listings in their local area or across the country; read tips on networking, résumés, and interviews; and more.

[Virginia's IET Pathways Curriculum](#)

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center The Pathways Curriculum introduces essential foundational soft skills that employers expect of all employees, even those at the entry level, regardless of literacy skills. Pathways targets adult learners who read at the second through fourth grade equivalency levels, or who are transitioning into grade equivalent 5. Lessons adhere to the college and career readiness standards, and activities include reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy, and digital skills practice in the context of the workplace. Each unit of this curriculum may take from six to eight weeks to complete, and all documents are freely downloadable for printing. The Pathways curriculum is based on the Department of Labor's [Skills to Pay the Bills](#) soft skills curriculum.

Workforce Preparation at a Distance

In Virginia, adult education providers are quickly adapting to the new virtual realities of delivering integrated education and training and continuing to support learners in strengthening workforce skills. Following is a list of ideas that Virginia adult education programs have enacted this spring to keep IET and workforce preparation activities going at a distance:

- Facilitating regular opt-in Zoom sessions to guide learners through resume writing and job searching on [Virginia's Workforce Connection](#)
- Tapping into [workforce skills videos](#) to continue practicing until face-to-face skills training options are safely available again
- Supplementing instructional programming with online career readiness curricula, such as [SkillsUSA](#) or [Bring Your 'A' Game](#) from the Center for Work Ethic Development

For occupational training integration at a distance, programs are:

- working with training partners to develop training videos and online options for instruction, especially for jobs that include a skills component in their certification, such as C.N.A. and NCCER-related fields;
- utilizing training partners' online offerings, such as those available through the [Community College Workforce Alliance](#) and other colleges;
- keeping learners engaged with stackable online credentials, such as OSHA 10 and NCCER Core; and
- refocusing IET offerings to include postsecondary training and credentials that can be completed online. See this [initial list](#) of virtual training offerings.

Workforce preparation is a vital component of adult education's role in our state's workforce development system and one that is especially critical now as employers reimagine and restructure how they recruit, train, and upskill their workers. The strategies and resources in this article can be a starting point for more deeply integrating practices and content that support learners' development and strengthening of essential workforce skills, including flexibility, time management, critical thinking, and greater experience with technology as a vehicle for learning and communicating.

For more information, visit VALRC's [IET Blueprint Workforce Preparation Activities page](#) for updates and additional resources on delivering workforce readiness at a distance. Also see the [CTAE's Professional Development page](#) for guidance and technical assistance on IET programming. 



Dr. Kate Daly Rolander is the Workforce Education Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC). She supports Virginia's development and implementation of career pathways programs, assists instructors and staff in tailoring instruction for workforce readiness, and coordinates the state's PluggedInVA programs.

¹United States Department of Labor, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Attachment III, Key Terms and Definitions. https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_19-16_Attachment_III.pdf

The Virginia Common Access Portal: Connecting Service Providers to Increase Economic Opportunity

by Katherine Hansen

According to Felix Schapiro, Workforce Policy Analyst in the Office of Governor Northam, “Access to the **right information** at the **right time** is key to increasing economic opportunity for every Virginian.” The Virginia Career Works Referral Portal, a new Virginia initiative, aims to do just that.

The portal is a groundbreaking statewide tool that refers Virginians to services that assist them in advancing their career paths and financial independence through training, certification, education, and employment services. From the safety and convenience of their homes, individuals seeking service can create an account, answer common intake questions, choose referral recommendations, and create their own journey towards a brighter future.

Because state and local health orders have forced workforce program closures, virtual tools to ensure Virginians get the critical services they need are more important than ever. For this reason, the portal development team quickly responded and moved forward the portal’s release timeline in order to launch it statewide on May 11, 2020. This valuable tool will aid in addressing the increased demand for services as Virginia begins our economic recovery process.

Currently supported by six state agencies (with more to be added), the portal is a “no wrong door” approach to service referrals among workforce development agencies. This way, service seekers do not have to submit redundant information when accessing services, which will make their

experience more user-friendly. With improved communication among providers, they will now be able to coordinate services in a holistic approach. This means that Virginians can learn much sooner and with less effort on their part about more available services for which they qualify. Moreover, the portal is designed to be centered on the individual. This means that service-seekers are given the power to make personal decisions about their education and work choices by using the tool to access the data of their choosing and create their desired pathway forward.

The portal will also benefit the partnering agencies by reducing duplicative paperwork, thus increasing their service efficiency, fostering transparency, and generating improved data for ongoing program improvements. Especially when considering the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an even greater need for workforce programs to quickly and easily connect individuals with critical unemployment, educational, and social state services.

As one of the six partnering agencies, the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education is leading implementation efforts of the portal for adult education service providers. Through the summer 2020 months, a statewide process for receiving adult education requests for services from the portal has been established. Referrals have already started coming in to designated staff at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) who then dispatch them to the proper adult education regional program representative(s) for action.



Press Release

Read the [press release](#) about The Virginia Career Works Referral Portal from Governor Ralph Northam.

Announcing the launch of Virginia's common access referral portal

My Virginia Journey



How does the Virginia Career Works Referral Portal work?

When an individual seeking service creates an online account, the portal asks them a number of questions that mimics the experience of coming into a workforce center. These questions capture the individual's information in order to personalize service recommendations. As individuals provide more data, portal recommendations grow more accurate.

Once the individual completes their user profile setup, the portal recommends optional referrals and service possibilities, which the individual can review and add to their "My Journey" page. The individual is informed that each agency from whom they have requested service will contact them according to their chosen contact method preference. In most cases, the step-by-step guidance within the referrals tells the individual what paperwork they need to have available when meeting with an agency professional.

Looking Ahead

The Virginia Career Works Referral Portal is reimagining how Virginians can be better served through the alignment and coordination of service providers. The portal launch is only the first step. Further integration and development efforts will continue to improve technical functionality, streamline processes, and incorporate additional partner agencies. [Learn more](#) and help spread the word about how the portal can solve real challenges for Virginians accessing services as well as support and sustain interagency coordination.

Get started by helping your learners create an account and begin their journey. Give them the opportunity to initiate referrals to their service providers and get the support they need in order to thrive. 



The Virginia Careerworks Referral Portal is reimagining how Virginians can be better served through the alignment and coordination of service providers.



Katherine Hansen, M.Ed., serves as the Communications & Community Support Specialist for the VALRC. She is a certified TESOL instructor and Project Management Professional (PMP). Katherine's career experience bridges the academic, nonprofit, and corporate worlds in global intercultural communications, teaching/training, and program/organization development.

WORKING WITH LOW LITERACY LEARNERS WHO HAVE LIMITED OR NO INTERNET ACCESS

by Elizabeth Severson-Irby

Teaching reading in a time of social distancing and remote learning can be challenging, especially for those who have limited or no Internet access. In the last few months, there have been countless webinars regarding strategies to use during remote learning. However, most of these strategies and platforms require both teachers and learners to have access to reliable Internet, often requiring enough bandwidth or data to stream videos.

Figure 1 is from a blog, [Videoconferencing Alternatives: How Low-Bandwidth Teaching Will Save Us All](#) by Daniel Stanford. In his blog, Daniel discusses finding other ways to interact with learners besides relying on high-bandwidth videoconferencing. The following suggestions fall in line with what Daniel discusses while also help teachers maintain meaningful instruction when working with those with limited or no Internet access.

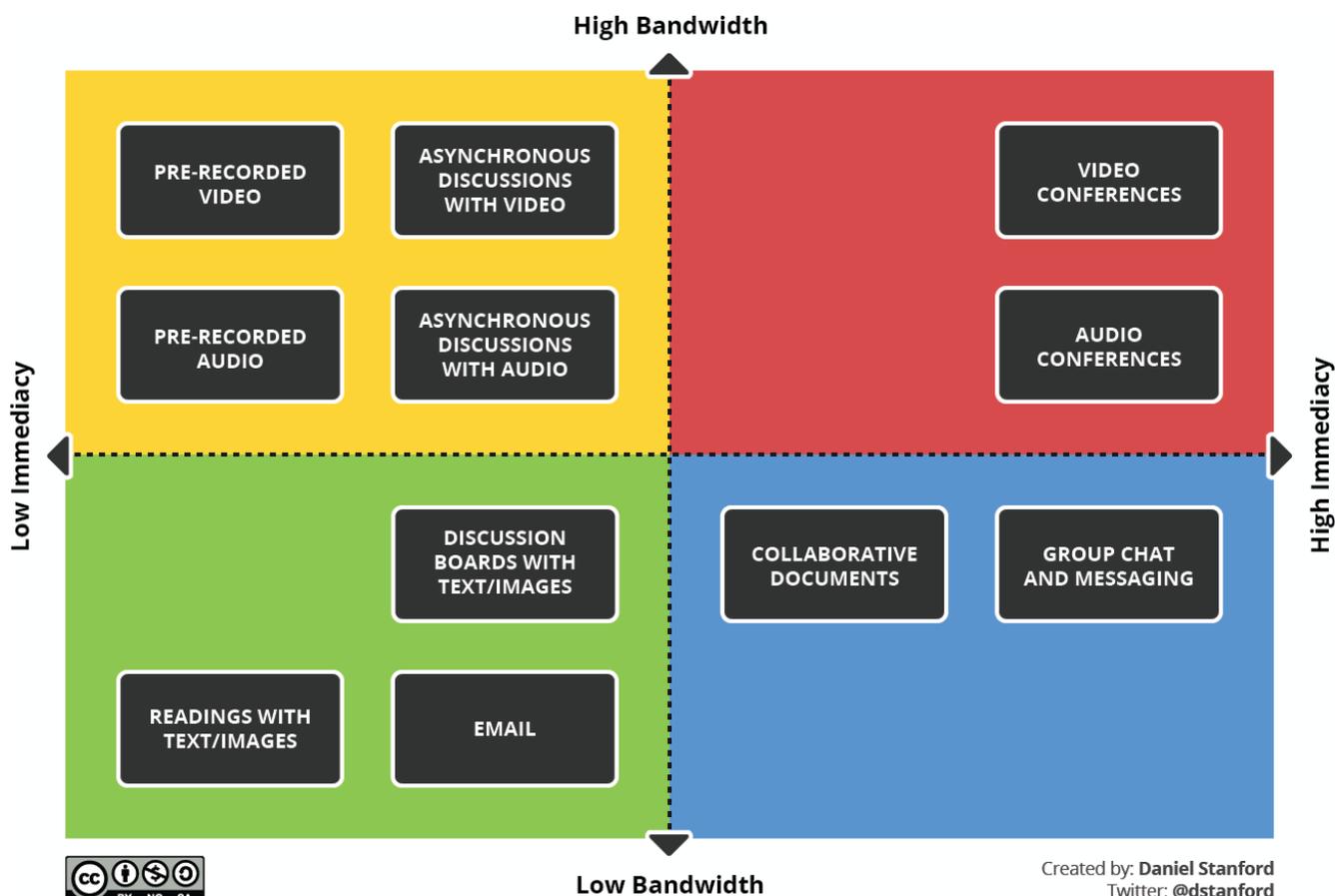
- 1. Know what type of Internet access your learner has and start there.** This may seem like an obvious tip, but don't assume that your learner has the same access as yourself or other learners. While some learners may have higher speed access, they may have limited data or may have to share access with kids or spouses, causing Internet to be slower or unavailable.
- 2. If working with multiple learners at one time, have several options for participation.** Most video conferencing platforms have a dial in option. This is a good option for those who may not have reliable access or may not have Internet. While they will not be able to view a screen, they can still benefit from the conversation and be able to participate in the lesson. If you have learners that dial in, make sure to explain what is on the screen, or ensure they have a copy of what is on the screen.
- 3. Have a common book or shared read. If possible, have learners participate in a novel study or shared read.** Many libraries are still open for curbside pick-up, so this may be an option for getting several copies of a book. If your program has class sets of novels, see if you can arrange safe pick-up or drop-off options. If each learner has a hard copy of the text, you can minimize the need for shared screens or reading articles from Internet site such as [Newsela](#), [ReadTheory](#), [CommonLit](#), or [ReadWorks](#) (Note: these sites are all free and wonderful for getting paired texts or finding leveled articles, but keep in mind, not all learners can access them).

4. **Use closed captioning.** In a conversation with John Sabatini, the researcher involved with the [Study Aid & Reading Assessment \(SARA\) reading study](#), he suggested having learners use closed captioning when watching TV. He mentioned that since most TVs have a closed captioning option, this might be a way for learners to practice reading while not in class. This is also a good option for, and one frequently used by, English language learners. Captioning can be scaffolded by either including the volume or having it on mute when watching TV. Instructors and learners can then discuss the content, just as they would when reading an article or book. (If you are interested in learning more about the SARA reading study, email [Elizabeth Severson-Irby](#).)

Now, more than ever, it is important to keep individuals motivated and engaged in their learning. By providing options for those with limited or no Internet access, learners can still participate in, and gain from, meaningful instruction. ✓



Elizabeth Severson-Irby is the Literacy Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC). In her role, she provides leadership for instruction and program management in Virginia's adult education and literacy programs, working with both public and private agencies and educational programs to ensure that adults have access to the educational resources they need.



Created by: Daniel Stanford
Twitter: @dstanford

Meeting the Challenge of Online Learning Disparities for Adult Learners

by Donna Walker James



Issues of digital disparity have never been so stark. Just logging into a home computer and working from home is now so obviously a luxury reserved for those with broadband, a computer, and the right skills to have one of those work-from-home (WFH) jobs.

The shutdown of our regular services on March 13, caused by COVID-19, has allowed Computer CORE time for deep introspection as an organization as we work to build up the resilience of our adult students to enter and re-enter the workplace. We have done things we have never done before, taught classes we've never taught before, brought in new volunteers in different ways, and questioned long-standing practices. We have gotten to know our students better than ever before through introductions—and constant reintroductions—on Zoom. We've had a chance for students to Zoom chat and Zoom raise their hands to fully participate in conversations. We've even enlisted a creative writing instructor through a nonprofit called HEARD to let our students explore their own voices as they define and redefine their career goals. At CORE, we asked ourselves, "if not now, when?" We've found the courage—out of necessity—to act on changes that may have never come. And to experiment.

Here's some information on our path to online/distance learning:

Waking up: The first step in this new era was to really wake up and realize we were not exempt from creating distance learning just because we specifically recruit students who lack basic computer skills, and, usually, lack computers too. As we looked around us, asked our local adult service agencies and literacy programs about their plans, and knew parents (including our students) were gearing up to move to online instruction, it was clear we had to do the same.

Providing laptops: Part of our prep work for online learning necessitated Computer CORE's first ever online purchases of refurbished laptops for those of our students who had no computer whatsoever at home. These were delivered primarily in early April, with one-on-one hand-offs to students with gloves and masks in the parking lot outside our closed classrooms.



computer core

Observation and practice: Another step was observing one of our volunteers using both Zoom and Google Classroom by an experienced public school teacher who has always used Google Classroom even in her in-person classes. This volunteer helped build our confidence that it was possible to teach basic computer skills (Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint and, in fact, Google's G-Suite as well) online. We "sat in" this class as the original cohort seamlessly transitioned from in-person to online classes. Then we saw the practice work again as a new online-only cohort was recruited, lent Chromebooks as needed, and went into action. Interestingly, the Zoom format also allowed for a sign language interpreter for one of the newly recruited students. I also convened multiple Zoom classes with our students to practice using Zoom prior to a full push for distance learning.

Convincing: The third step was to communicate individually with and then convene a Zoom meeting of the 45 volunteer classroom teachers who sign on to teach our students two days a week, three hours per day, for eighteen weeks, as well as all of our Saturday morning tutors. About 40 volunteer teachers, tutors, and former teachers participated in an online discussion about online instruction. While all did not chime in, three teachers expressed enthusiasm and three expressed strong reservations. Out of this meeting, a small group of teachers agreed to help CORE launch distance learning. A few new volunteers were also recruited.

Planning: A staff member and this group of distance learning teachers spent about two weeks in April preparing class titles, days, times, and lesson plans. Rather than following our standard basic computer skills and workforce skills curricula, the eleven classes created all reflect the personal skills and interests of the brave volunteer teachers willing to teach. Some of these brand new classes cover online learning itself such as netiquette on Zoom, standard safety practices, and using Office 365 and Google G-Suite. There is also a class on using your smart phone and one on virtual practice interviewing. Finally, there are pretty advanced classes on computing and coding with Python.

Implementation: Distance learning classes are announced on our website. They are primarily for our 95 students who were enrolled when classes paused. Concerned that classes might not fill up, we also invited all 2019 alumni and a few students from partner programs. Although we planned to cap classes at ten students and allow students to only take two classes, some classes have over 20 students and 7-10 students are taking multiple classes. Altogether, about 55

Since 1999, [Computer CORE](#) has prepared underserved adults to realize career aspirations with foundational computer and professional skills.

3,000+
Graduates

100+
Students every semester

200+
Students per year

97
Countries of origin



Students
of
Color



Women



Students from
low-income
households

6
Locations in NOVA

students are filling 195 slots in distance learning classes. Among other lessons learned, we are finding that many challenges of getting to class including the commute and some aspects of childcare are solved for students. These distance learning classes all started the week of May 4 and continue 6 to 9 weeks depending on the teacher. A CORE staff member is the Zoom convener and moderator for most of the classes (except the teacher who convenes class on Google Meet). We have also been learning WebX (another departure for us), particularly from a new group of online tutors from E*TRADE.

Next steps: Another round of distance learning classes will begin July 6 and last through the end of August. In addition, we will reconvene all the volunteer teachers who were active in March and offer lessons learned about distance learning, with the hopes of enticing more to try it out. Now we have classes for them to “sit in” on, recordings to watch, teachers to consult, and students who already know Zoom. While 44 of our current students are participating actively in distance learning, 51 are not. If additional online instructors are recruited, we can hold several very basic classes to bring these students along. New fundraising efforts are centering on buying another wave of computers if equipment access remains one of the barriers. Our inactive students have been unable to participate for several reasons: a few had the virus (thankfully, they have recovered), some have extremely low-level computer skills, and others have found the demands of work and childcare more than enough without having to worry about computer classes at this time.

The new normal: Our regular fall semester is planned to start September 8, the day after Labor Day. Our plan is to re-enroll all our spring 2020 students in the fall 2020 semester, with no registration requirements or new materials fees. We have invited back all the students and all the volunteers. We do not, of course, know if we can re-open the classrooms and—even after extensive cleaning and distribution of masks, etc.—so we have a few contingency plans in mind. For example, we may reduce class size to six students and have students attend on alternate days. Computer CORE is also likely to offer a hybrid of in-person and online classes not only this fall, but for all time going forward.

All our staff, volunteer teachers, and students have learned so much during these trying times. Now all the students will remember—with all the tech-savvy people in the world—the days and months when they first used Zoom! Our biggest lesson: being brave and flexible. 🍏



Donna Walker James became the Executive Director of Computer CORE in August 2019. Her background includes running a local workforce development program in West Philadelphia and years of policy work on School-to-Work connections and analyzing effective programs for young people. More recently she worked at Goodwin House and was Deputy Director of Senior Services of Alexandria and Acting Executive Director of Volunteer Alexandria. James earned both her B.A. in urban studies and M. Ed. at the University of Pennsylvania.



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At CORE, we asked ourselves, “if not now, when?”

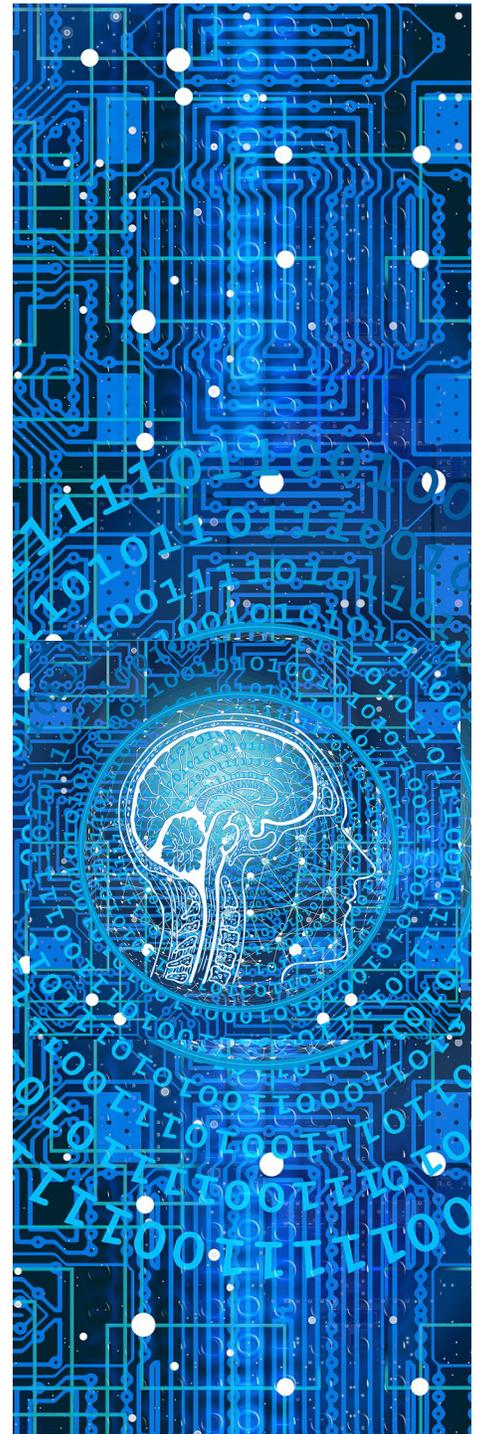
A DIGITAL LITERACY MODEL FOR SUSTAINING FUTURE ESOL EDUCATION

By Hali Dayberry

This article has been shortened from its original length. [Follow this link to access the complete article](#) with added tips, tools, and best practices.

While the shift to remote learning over the last few months has been challenging and overwhelming, it has allowed for more meaningful connections between educators. Events and professional development that were meant to be face-to-face have been transitioned to a virtual format. Educators have also come together and developed last-minute webinars as well as asynchronous discussions to share experiences and tips for teaching remotely. Being able to learn from other practitioners has been an invaluable tool during this unprecedented time. What is now challenging is the flood of information that has been released since the shift to remote learning. Adult English language instructors have been given access to a wealth of knowledge regarding technology tools, online teaching strategies, and resources for bridging access concerns. However, programs need to be able to synthesize this plethora of information and develop a digital literacy toolbox that works best for their context, teachers, and students.

This shift to remote learning has also highlighted that integrating digital literacy into adult English language education needs to be a main priority once face-to-face teaching is able to resume. Research shows that digital literacy is connected to better community access and workforce skills (Rosen, 2020) and therefore needs to be a core element of adult ESOL classrooms. Creating a digital literacy toolbox that includes tools for communication, distance education platforms, and additional digital literacy tools and strategies can allow programs to determine how best to integrate the digital literacy lessons learned during remote learning into English language classrooms in order to meet the digital literacy needs of students. The proposed model for developing a digital literacy toolbox is based on research and best practices that were presented during webinars as well as asynchronous discussions across the country during the COVID-19 response. These best practices are used to develop a further model that integrates digital literacy into the framework of English language programs. This



allows students to gain digital literacy skills while preparing programs, teachers, and students for future situations that may demand remote, distance, or blended learning.

Step 1: Survey students and instructors.

The first step to building a digital literacy toolbox is to learn from students' and teachers' experiences with remote learning. When implementing a digital literacy plan, it is vital to know what tools and strategies teachers and students are familiar with and what digital access they have outside of the classroom.

Step 2: Create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

In order to not overwhelm teachers with a flood of resources, programs should create professional learning communities with the purpose of having a select group of teachers develop a digital literacy toolbox for the English language program. This type of cohort structure has been modeled by the [Illinois Digital Learning Lab \(IDLL\)](#).

Additional resources:

- CrowdED Learning's free and open resource for [creating a toolkit for reading and writing](#)
- [Integrating Digital Literacy into English Language Instruction: Issue Brief and its Companion Resource](#)

Step 3: Create a digital literacy resource center.

During this step, the PLC delves into actually selecting the resources for digital literacy that will be used at each level in the program. The PLCs should decide on criteria and categories for digital literacy tools in order to narrow down the options that they present to the instructors in their program. One decision that needs to be made is to choose a main communication tool per level. The shift to remote learning showed how important it is for teachers to be able to

communicate with their students outside of the classroom. Choosing a communication tool for each level of instruction at your program allows students and teachers to all become familiar with and learn how to use the same tool. These tools are used for communicating class schedule changes, extended learning opportunities, and providing resources. In addition to tools for communication, the PLC should also select tools that can be integrated into classroom instruction as well as platforms for distance education.

Additional resources:

- [Kentwood, Michigan Public Schools Resource Hub](#)
- [CrowdED Learning Resource Build Your Reading and Writing Toolkit](#)

Step 4: Meet access needs.

The recent shift to remote learning has also highlighted the fact that many adult English language students lack access to the infrastructure needed to participate in remote, distance, or blended learning. Some of the access issues are lacking Wi-Fi, having to share devices with family members, and/or not having access to any device at home (Rosen, 2020). Many programs are already starting to develop strategies to meet the access need. Program management should use the results from the student surveys to evaluate what access needs are affecting their specific populations and develop ways to bridge the access gap. Some examples of those strategies are creating lending libraries, partnering with community resources like public libraries or Internet providers, and educating students on digital resources and access.

Step 5: Implement.

Once the program has decided on communication tools, developed a resource hub, and set up a plan for meeting access

needs, teachers can start to implement the new digital literacy toolbox. Before implementing the tools, teachers and/or programs need to ensure that students have access to an email address (Van Steenwyk, 2020a). This is a necessary step because most technology tools require an email address and because this will be a good way to increase digital literacy skills and communicate with students.

The next step is to orient the students on the main communication tool that has been selected for their level.

Additional resource:

Ed Tech Center's [mLearning Resource Hub](#)

After students are well-oriented on a digital literacy tool, instructors can start to integrate these tools into their classrooms. Digital literacy tools can be used in a variety of ways in the classroom as well as for extended learning opportunities outside of the classroom depending on students' access.

Prior to and during implementation, it may also be necessary to address common teacher concerns for integrating digital literacy tools into the classroom.

One common concern amongst teachers with implementing new digital literacy tools in the classroom is that it will be too time consuming both while planning and while in the classroom. Several of the practitioners who have shared their experiences of teaching during the COVID-19 response have touched on this. Nan Frydland (2020) commented on this by saying, "Teaching technology does not take more time than teaching school." She went on to explain that in her beginning literacy class, a lot of time is spent on explaining instructions and how to learn from a textbook. It is commonly agreed that teaching students from low-literacy backgrounds how to learn is valuable, so it should also be seen

as valuable to teach those with low-digital literacy how to gain digital literacy skills.

Jenny Siegfried (2020) was also asked about the time commitment during the LINCS discussion on IDLL, and she responded by saying that she spent very little extra time outside of her normal planning time on this project but that there were some occasions where she had to spend extra time learning the tools. She also mentioned spending time in her team meetings for the facilitated learning community; however, since this model is proposing that a select group of instructors participate in the PLC to create the digital literacy toolbox, this structure would save instructors the time of finding and vetting digital literacy tools and then integrating them into their classrooms. The model also emphasizes using lessons learned from the COVID-19 response to create the digital literacy toolbox in hopes that teachers will already have had some exposure to and experience with these tools.

Another concern is that students may feel reluctant to learn digital literacy skills and may see this as taking away from their English language learning. Jenny Siegfried (2020) was also asked about this during the LINCS discussion and explained that at first students commented on the fact that a significant part of the class was focused on technology; however, they soon came to see the benefit of it because they were also learning important college and career readiness skills such as using email, word processing, and spreadsheets. Nan Frydland (2020) had a similar response when asked about students' enthusiasm for digital literacy. She explained that her students who have successfully participated in remote learning with WhatsApp are now more interested in learning other new digital literacy tools. She expressed that it is important for English language learners to feel that what they are learning is relevant. Having to learn remotely gave digital literacy a new relevance for them, and once they saw success, they were open to learning even more. Based on

these experiences, if students are given the opportunity to increase their digital literacy skills and feel successful using them while seeing the real-world relevance of these skills, they will be open-minded to more digitally focused classrooms.

Step 6: Evaluate.

As with any new tool or strategy that is implemented in the classroom, the digital literacy toolbox needs to be evaluated. Using the same PLC that developed the toolkit, teachers could periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their technology tools, their students' digital literacy skills, and the integration of digital literacy into the classroom. For the evaluation process, it would be best to use guided questioning and/or rubrics to evaluate and make any necessary changes to the toolbox.

Additional resource:

- Edtech Center at World Education mLearning Resource Hub on [evaluation](#)

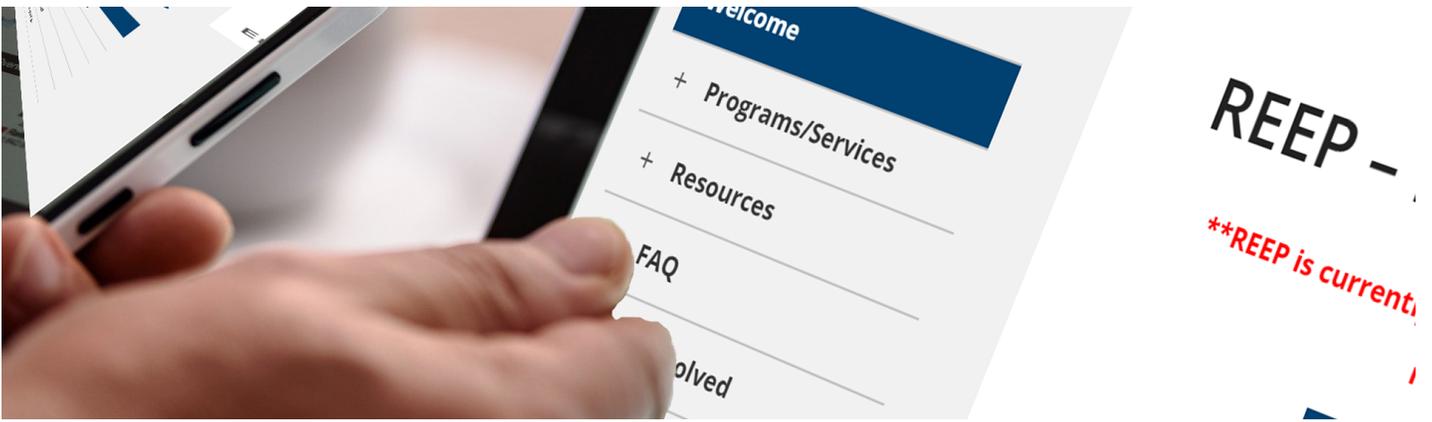
Putting your digital literacy model into practice is no easy feat. The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center stands ready to help you along the way. Let us know how we can assist you in capturing what has been learned during the past few months and using it to sustain your future program offerings. 🟢



Hali Dayberry, MA TESOL, is the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC). In this role, she coordinates teacher professional development that aligns with state and federal initiatives, as well as local interests and needs. This work includes the design and delivery of online courses, face-to-face workshops, and virtual meetings, all with a focus on the practice of teaching English to adult learners.

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Moving Forward 2020: Our Model for Integrating Digital Literacy into an ESL Curriculum

by Micayla Burrows

The technologies of our modern world present many opportunities for adult English language learners to participate more fully in their community. The extent to which they have developed their digital literacy skills can determine if

from more than 90 countries. Our students come to us with the general goal of improving English in order to adjust to American society, but our services impact their lives as learners, citizens, family members, and workers. REEP is currently focusing on three strategic areas

We have learned that understanding the principles of teaching digital literacy within a learner-centered, whole language, life skills instructional system is essential to integrating digital literacy into an ESL curriculum.

of our program which include curriculum revision, digital literacy, and student equity.

those technologies bridge a gap or create an obstacle. Now more than ever due to the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis and the subsequent need to move classes to an online platform, digital literacy skills integration is crucial to helping students achieve their learning goals. Therefore, REEP is currently revising our Adult ESL Curriculum to align with English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) and digital literacy integration. We have learned that understanding the principles of teaching digital literacy within a learner-centered, whole language, life skills instructional system is essential to integrating digital literacy into an ESL curriculum.

Since 1975, REEP has helped more than 90,000 adult English language learners (ELLs)

The [REEP Adult ESL Curriculum](#) is a comprehensive system that provides instructional direction for programs and teachers of adult immigrants and refugees.

First published in 1982, this student-centered, life skills focused curriculum is continuously updated to reflect advances in the fields of adult education, instructed second language acquisition, and literacy in order to meet the changing needs of our students. Needs assessment and goal setting activities are at the heart of the curriculum and enable students to actively direct their learning. Students vote on life skills topics such as health, employment, community, government, and transportation to determine the context through which they will develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Digital literacy skills development weaves through all levels

and topics of the curriculum.

Our curriculum is a living document, and updating it is an ongoing process that I have been a part of since joining REEP in 2016. The key shift in digital literacy life skills instruction REEP has made is the intentional implementation aspect. Using the [Northstar Digital Literacy Standards](#) as a guide, we identified target digital skill areas on which to focus instruction, similar to how we identify grammatical areas to focus on by English level (see our [Digital Literacy Skills Chart on our website under instructional planning](#)).

As an example, in our [Getting Started Unit](#), a possible language objective in our low beginning class is, "8. Identify immediate family members." We've identified a digital literacy resource, one of our [ReepWorld.org interactive lessons](#), and we identify a digital literacy skills group titled Internet 1. Our goal is that in addition to the content and language practice students get by completing the online interactive lesson, the teacher also instructs on one or a few relevant digital literacy skills such as identifying the address bar and understanding its functionality and using a hyperlink to access other webpages. By increasing the intentional teaching for digital language and digital skills, students develop the self-sufficiency skills to independently complete the activity at home. It's also important to note that ESL teaching strategies and digital skills implementation strategies mirror each other. Modeling, wait time, visuals, background building/motivation, scaffolding, and utilizing a variety of grouping techniques, etc. are all essential to both ESL and digital literacy learning.

On a programmatic level, the shift to increase digital literacy goes beyond classroom integration. We have long been a program that has survived by word-of-mouth marketing, in-person registration, testing, and walk-in information given out by our program staff. Implementing online classes has been a challenge. All of our staff members have needed to upskill

and take on new responsibilities within our online presence. REEP continues to improve our social media presence on Twitter (@reepnews), Facebook (@reepesl), Instagram (@reepworld), and hopefully soon LinkedIn as an outlet for program news and reaching out to our community. In April, we started using Microsoft Teams to increase collaboration online with our instructional teams, lab assistants, and coordinating staff. We are updating contact information in our database with a new focus on obtaining student email addresses. In addition, we are continually working on improving our websites at www.apsva.us/reep and www.reepworld.org.

Please feel free to reach out to [me](#) or the [staff at REEP](#) if you have any questions. We appreciate hearing from other programs in the adult education community. 📍



Micayla Burrows is the Community Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator for the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP). Micayla manages community-based adult ESL classes in three community centers in Arlington, Virginia, and she is responsible for the recruitment and training of community volunteers for all program components.

Remember to visit VALRC's online communities for support and resources.

- [Teacher Leader virtual professional learning community \(PLC\)](#)
- [Virginia Community-Based Literacy Organization \(CBLO\) Forum](#)
- [Program Manager Resources for Remote Adult Education](#)



Libraries are For Everyone

by Dr. Nan Carmack

The American Library Association promotes the slogan, “Libraries are for Everyone!” and it is certainly true. While entering a building brimming with books may feel intimidating to a new reader, your public library is eager to support you, as a teacher or tutor, and your student, as a learner. Virginia Public Libraries offer many resources for that very purpose.

Most libraries have places where you can meet with your student; many have special low literacy high interest collections; and all have access to the following learning platforms through the [Library of Virginia](#). Local public library cards are required to access some of the products. We recognize that privacy is paramount, and all public libraries have legislation protecting patron records. However, we also recognize the reluctance of some to provide any personal information. If this is a concern for your student(s), feel free to ask for a meeting with the library’s Director, and they will help create a work around. In fact, meeting with the Library Director to get a full scope of what a particular library might have beyond the resources mentioned is useful.

For non-native English learners, explore these learning platforms:

1. **Rocket Languages** (requires a library card)

- Found at www.finditva.com on the High School, Adults, and Index pages or on your library’s website
- Online, self-paced, English learning in two languages: Spanish and Japanese
- Online, self-paced, English learning in low-Lexile English for those with basic English speaking skills
- Best used in an environment in which a student can practice speaking aloud—requiring a microphone-enabled device
- Lessons can be worked through together or independently.

The [Lexile Framework® for Reading](#) is a scientific approach to measuring both reading ability and the text complexity of reading materials on the same developmental scale.

Educators use Lexile measures to match students with text, putting them on the path to success in school, college, and careers.

2. **Universal Class** is an online learning platform that must be accessed through your library's website. (requires a library card)

- Classes are self-paced and may be taken independently or with a tutor.
- Classes include ESL Basic Grammar, ESL Basic Writing Skills, and ESL Grammar Skills courses 1 through 5.
- Instruction includes a U.S. Citizenship test preparation course.
- Courses are all in English with both written and video presentations of the material.

This platform offers many high-interest, low Lexile opportunities for both English speaking and non-native speaking students, without a library card.

3. **ReadIt!** is an information database where tutors and students can find short articles on topical subjects to read and discuss (no library card required in Virginia).

- Found at your library's website or at www.finditva.com on Middle School, High School, Adults, and Index pages
- Translate feature: translate any article into any language using the "translate" button for comparison exercises and independent learning
- Low-Lexile content on civics and culture, life skills (including citizenship requirements, currency, etc.), literature and science
- "Listen" feature highlights text being read as it moves across the screen (although it is robotic and reads titles and sidebars as well, which is sometimes confusing)
- Useful downloadable/printable student worksheets and reference guides as well as a thorough description of features

Local public libraries can also help tutors navigate and understand these resources. Most provide professional development guidance either to an individual tutor or to a

group. Additional resources to address organic learning challenges can be found at www.finditva.com on the Inclusive Resources page, including dyslexia, autism, and audio/visual impairments.

Virginia's public libraries are committed to community success—for every individual—and are eager to serve educators and students.

Please accept the thanks of the library community for your work with Virginia's adult learners. We are here to support you and them! 📌



Dr. Nan Carmack holds a B.A. in education from the College of William and Mary, an M.L.I.S. from Drexel University, and an Ed.D. from the University of Lynchburg. Dr. Carmack has worked in and for Virginia public libraries for 15 years. She believes that public libraries exist at the intersection of social justice and intellectual curiosity. Her mission is to connect public libraries to organizations and individuals pursuing the same.



GROWTH Coaching: Making Time for Reflection and Action Planning Even in Turbulent Times

As a professional development specialist, I've long believed in the value of coaching, both as coach and coachee. Over the years, the emphasis on evidence-based best practices in professional learning—approaches that are intensive, ongoing, and job-embedded; are specific and focused; build knowledge and relationships through collaborative learning; are differentiated to address practitioners' needs; and incorporate clear feedback and outcome data—have only highlighted the importance of coaching as tool for professional growth. Our recent period of enforced telework gave several of us at VALRC a chance to deepen our coaching know-how by taking virtual coaching courses offered by the [Instructional Coaching Group](#), a consulting group led by education researcher and coaching expert Jim Knight.

The course I took, "A Process for Distance Coaching," centered around the GROWTH model for coaching. GROWTH was developed as a tool for leaders, and it is adaptable to address a variety of problems or purposes. It can be used to focus on issues that speak primarily to leaders and administrators (*How can we increase access to technology for the adult learners in our community? How should we respond to this RFP? How can we improve learner recruitment? Reduce staff and volunteer turnover?*) as well as those that

are likely to be on classroom teachers' minds (*How do I increase student interaction in an online learning environment? How can I adapt my teaching and curriculum for remote learning? How can I increase differentiation in my multilevel class? How can I get students to do more writing? How can I help students improve their quantitative reasoning?*).

GROWTH makes use of facilitative coaching: the coach should approach the conversation as a partner, but instead of providing suggestions, the coach listens deeply and offers guiding questions. GROWTH is grounded in faith that people know how to solve their own problems (even when the process requires additional learning or connecting with partners, funders, colleagues, or experts) but that most people benefit from support in considering their options and putting together an action plan.

The six elements of the GROWTH model are:

- **Goal:** The coach helps the coachee set a SMART goal. A coachee may come with a problem or purpose in mind, and the coach's questions can help clarify the goal and ensure it is specific, measurable, and achievable. The goal becomes the guiding focus for the coaching conversation.
- **Reality:** The coach talks the coachee

through their current situation, acknowledging resources, barriers, and other factors that will impact the coachee as they work toward their goal.

- **Options:** In this brainstorming step, the coach's questions should encourage the coachee to consider their "first instinct" solutions as well as give them space to consider other alternatives.
- **Will:** Here the coachee commits to the action steps they will take to meet their goal.
- **Tactics:** Here, with help from the coach's prompting, the coachee fills in the "how" and "when," making their next steps concrete.
- **Habits:** This step focuses on sustaining progress. The coachee is encouraged to reflect on habits and personal qualities that may help or hinder them in their progress and to consider those tendencies in their action plan.

The GROWTH model provides questions to guide the coach at each step of the process, but these are not a script. It's important that the coach be flexible in adapting the model to their own practice and the actual coaching situation. While a GROWTH coach may not be an expert in the coachee's discipline, they should bring their coaching skills to the conversation, listening actively, empathizing, clarifying, and asking cogent questions. The developers of GROWTH also emphasize a "coaching way of being" that includes humility, positivity, and a solution focus. Additionally, there are two important "Rs" that bookend the GROWTH process: relationship and results. A relationship grounded in trust and transparency sets the stage for success, and after the initial planning conversation, there should be opportunities to follow up on—and celebrate—results.

The six GROWTH elements may seem like a lot to get through in a single conversation, but in fact, a GROWTH coaching session can

often address them all productively in about a half hour. A coachee may find that just a few sessions provide valuable "space to think" through an important challenge as well as motivation in carrying out their action plan. The timeframe for individual conversations as well as the number of meetings will vary based on the goal selected and can be adjusted by each coach/coachee pair. This flexibility makes the GROWTH model particularly relevant in times of change and transition. GROWTH has been studied primarily with education leaders and in teacher-student conversations, but it can also be applied in student-to-student interactions and in community contexts.

Do you think you would benefit from a dedicated time to think through your approach to an upcoming project or current challenge? Would a supportive listener with a fresh perspective and a solution focus help you? Would any of the application ideas below be a good fit for your program or situation? Can you think of other ways the GROWTH model might be relevant in your classroom, program, or community?

- If you have a formal or informal mentoring relationship with another educator, try including GROWTH in a few of your conversations. It may help bring energy and focus to your discussions.
- Pair up teacher-to-teacher or manager-to-manager. Find an interested peer and agree to be GROWTH partners. Take turns as coach and coachee. Commit to at least two half-hour conversations in each role.
- If you are an instructional technology specialist, curriculum specialist, or other teacher leader, try using the GROWTH approach in your conversations with teachers.
- Use GROWTH in one-on-one goal-setting conversations with learners. Use GROWTH with students during the intake process when you help them strategize about how they will overcome barriers to their educational goals.

- Encourage students to pair up and use the GROWTH model to support each other. They will be practicing communication skills and workforce preparation skills such as critical thinking, self management, and working with others. (Be sure students are willing: coaching should always be opt-in rather than mandatory. Explicitly address coaching priorities including respect and confidentiality.)
- Explore whether the GROWTH model can play a role in career counseling, case management, or other aspects of your workforce development partnerships. 🟢

Learn more:

- [A brief overview of the GROWTH model](#) and other resources from [GROWTH Coaching International](#)
- Radical Learners blog and other resources from [Jim Knight and ICG](#)



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Relationships
Building the Trust



G

Goals
What do you need to achieve?

R

Reality
What is happening now?

O

Options
What could you do?

W

Will
What will you do?

T

Tactics
How and when will you do it?

H

Habits
How will you sustain your success?



Results
Celebrating the results

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¹See the [LINCS Professional Development \(PD\) Center Self-Assessment Tool](#).

²Note that these questions focus mostly on instructor behaviors rather than student outcomes. Measurable GROWTH goals for instructors can focus on teacher or student outcomes. This is a difference between GROWTH coaching and Impact Cycle instructional coaching, the approach Jim Knight is most known for. Impact cycle coaching also tends to be more intensive/of longer duration and uses a dialogical rather than facilitative coaching approach.

³ You may find that some of your workforce development system partners are using [Motivational Interviewing](#), a facilitative counseling method that has some similarities to the GROWTH approach.

#GoOPENVA:



Explore.

Collaborate.

Create.

by Jean Weller

Educators are always trying new ideas and new approaches to reach their students. Student circumstances shift, technology evolves, and research reveals new insights. As much professional learning as any one teacher does, it is hard to stay abreast AND create new materials to support new work.

[#GoOpenVA](#) is a new space for Virginia educators to come together and share the burden with each other. Just launched in late January, the site acts as both a repository for openly-licensed education resources as well as a community for collaborating with other Virginia educators.

Openly-licensed education resources (OER) are digital resources that are not JUST free, but also provide copyright permissions ahead of time to teachers. This allows teachers to be able to easily edit and re-share resources they find on the site, adapting them for their own needs and the requirements of their individual students. It is a huge step in helping teachers personalize learning for their students. Teachers can take a lesson written by someone else and translate it into another language, add graphics, or re-word student-facing materials. The educator can then share their changes with other teachers, who may have similar needs for their own students.

The collaboration on [#GoOpenVA](#) is generally conducted through online [Groups](#), which are places on the site where like-minded educators can gather and share what they have found or plan to create resources to meet their needs. They can also discuss the latest research, provide links to important articles, and express their own experiences in trying new techniques. This ability to share and communicate with other Virginia teachers regarding a specific topic can be a boost for teachers currently separated from each other by social distancing measures. Groups can be either open to anyone who wants to join, or can be closed to address only specific memberships.

[#GoOpenVA](#) is an open site, meaning that anyone around the world can search and download helpful resources. However, only Virginia educators can join as registered users, which allows them to add materials to the site and participate in Groups. Almost two-thirds of Virginia's school divisions offer single-sign-on access (either through Clever or Google) to [#GoOpenVA](#), with more joining every day. To find out if you have access using single-sign-

on, ask your local technology support person.

There are many helpful resources to get you up to speed on how to actually participate in #GoOpenVA. The first place you may wish to go is the [Users Hub](#), which provides tips, notes, and screencasts for various things that you can do on the site. If you prefer a “big picture” overview of OER and #GoOpenVA, you can sign up for the 4-hour, online, self-paced course Introduction to OER hosted at [Virtual Virginia](#) (note: it may take 2-3 days to receive a login and password for Virtual Virginia). And if you learn by teaching, you can conduct your own local workshop using the materials available at the [Workshop in a Box](#) site, created with the help of the [Virginia Society for Technology in Education](#).

Whatever path you choose to become involved, you are welcome! #GoOpenVA was developed specifically to support Virginia educators as they share with each other, lessening the work each of us has to do individually to stay professionally up-to-date. We look forward to having you join us! 📍



Jean Weller is an Educational Technology Specialist with the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology. She has been involved with educational technology since 1988, and focuses on uses of technology combined with cognitive research to support the continual development of effective teaching and learning approaches.

If you find that your division does not have single sign-on access, please email (AFTER July 1, 2020) info@goopenva.org to request an account be created for you. Identify yourself as an adult educator, and provide your full name and the division(s) you serve.

From the VDOE



As schools and adult education programs make plans for instruction this fall, the Virginia Department of Education is committed to helping them keep equity issues front and center. The VDOE's [Recover, Redesign, Restart 2020](#) guidance to school divisions places a heavy emphasis on addressing equity issues that have been made all the more clear by the COVID-related closures.

We encourage adult education programs to take time to consider the “Ten Return to School Equity Strategies” found on page 14 of the guidance and the implications for their own programming and staffing supports. We know that adult education programs are serving some of the most vulnerable families in our communities and appreciate the work you do every day to lift up your students.

Adult literacy has a proud history of working to overcome barriers and create opportunities for adults and their families. Your work is more important than ever! 📍

2020

PROGRESS CALENDAR

JUN & JUL

JUN 29–JUL 22 (break for holiday)

JUL 6–9 [COABE Virtual](#)

AUG

25–26 [IDEAL Consortium Virtual](#)

SEP

17 VALRC Online Courses Begin

[Professional Learning Community \(PLC\) on Improving Reading Instruction in Meaning Skills](#)

(6 Weeks)

Runs: 9/17/20-10/28/20

Online Courses

[ESOL Basics](#)

(8 Weeks)

Runs: 9/17/2020-11/11/2020

[Developing Writing Skills in Adults](#)

(8 Weeks)

Runs: 9/17/2020-11/11/2020

POSTPONED

SETESOL
Richmond, VA
Moved to fall 2022

National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) Conference
Dallas, 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
Attend Virtual Vendor's [Exhibition Scheduled for JUL 14-16, 2020](#)

OCT

7-8 [National Council for Workforce Education \(NCWE\) Conference](#)
Virtual

27-30 [American Association for Adult and Continuing Education \(AAACE\) Conference](#)
Moved to Virtual

NOV

10-11 Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE), virtual

**All activities are still scheduled as of the date of publication.*