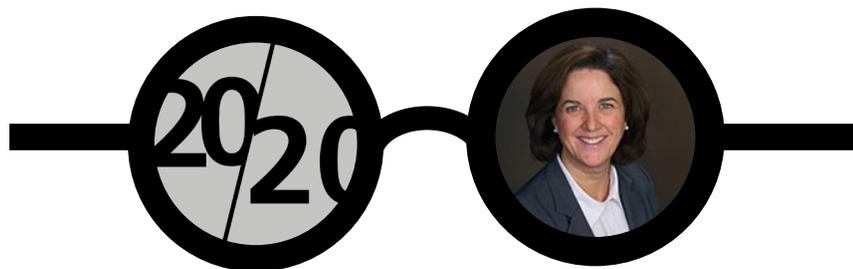


Bridging the Vision

by Joanne Huebner



20/20—It Takes More for Perfect Vision

In a little over three months, it will be the year 2020, an opportunity to seize the paradigm and move the perfect vision for adult education forward. What is perfect vision?

Eye doctors measure the quality of vision by considering three factors: visual acuity, eyesight, and vision. Visual **acuity** is the sharpness of your vision. It is a static measurement, influenced by light that is focused on a very small portion of the retina, useful to determine the relative clarity of your eyesight. (If you have ever had an eye exam, your visual acuity was measured by identifying letters or numbers on a standardized Snellen eye chart.) How do we in adult education benefit from 20/20 visual acuity? In this issue, Debbie Tuler shares how the **question formulation technique (QFT)** (p.12) sharpened her visual acuity, helping her to see the importance of providing skills that allow adults to **learn it on their own** rather than rely solely on what occurs in the classroom. Debbie emphasizes that if learners “don’t know **how** to ask questions...then they cannot find out what they really want to know in order to learn or make informed decisions.” She learned this technique through an in-depth online introductory course on the topic as part of her personal professional development plan.

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PROGRESS

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An assessment of visual acuity, however, is not predictive of the quality of vision in all situations. The term **eyesight** is used to describe qualities of vision—the ability to see, or the range of sight using horizontal, vertical, and peripheral focal points. MaryAnn Cunningham Florez, in her article “Use an Experiential Approach to Teach Soft Skills to Beginning Adult English Learners” (p.7), shares an example of how to expand the range of sight to teach the soft skills employers cite as a priority in hiring decisions. She improves the quality of instruction by sharing how to illustrate these skills so they are tangible and relatable, integrate them into routine, and practice the art of “doing” a skill, rather than just talking about it.

Adding to acuity and eyesight as measures of perfection, the definition of **vision** includes a variable and diverse range of visual abilities and skills—contrast, color vision, depth perception, focus, and the ability to track objects. **Universal design for learning (UDL)** is a research-based framework for instructional design that recognizes this same type of variability and diversity in learners. By providing multiple means for engagement, multiple means for representation of information, and multiple means for action and expression, UDL can impact how the brain learns—in other words, UDL enhances vision. In her article (p.3), Dr. Frances Smith echoes Debbie Tuler’s sentiments about the importance of skills that allow adults to learn on their own: “The UDL approach also focuses on explicitly teaching students the skills they will need to become life-long ‘expert learners.’”

It is nearly impossible to quantify perfect vision since it is so multi-faceted: focused, high quality, variable, and diverse. A more interesting question, I think, is: perfect for what? Solutions to correct and perfect vision come in many forms, depending on what you need: glasses, contacts, or LASIK surgery. Our goal at VALRC is to help you see your role in the vision for adult education more clearly by providing appropriate resources, tools, and solutions relative to *your* role and your experience. We hope you find this issue of **PROGRESS** full of ideas, tools, and resources than can change the focus and quality of your practice and make you feel supported in the varied and diverse roles you play in learner success as you launch this program year.

What is YOUR perfect vision for adult education as we move toward 2020? 



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.

Designing Instruction in Ways That Can Reach All Learners: Applying the Principles of Universal Design for Learning

by 2019 AE&L Conference Presenter Dr. Frances G. Smith

Think back for a moment to a recent learning experience that left you with a positive impression. Was the instructor engaging? Did they hook your interests from their first words? Did you feel like the information was personalized to something you wanted to learn? How about the ways that the information was presented—were the materials provided in multiple formats? Did the presenter use various modes of sharing their information? Finally, as a learner, did you have a fair opportunity to demonstrate your understanding? Were there optional ways for you to show what you knew?

These are the questions every adult educator should be considering as they design instruction for learners. Adult learners want to know why they are learning and to be actively involved in the process. Equally, they are more motivated by approaches that match their interests, background, and diversity (Brian, Kreuler, & Brownson, 2009). Applying the research-based framework of universal design for learning (UDL) ensures that educators are designing instruction that recognizes this variability and diversity in learners (CAST, 2018a).

What is Universal Design for Learning?

Universal design for learning (UDL) is an educational framework that places an emphasis on offering optional ways to represent information, engages the learner in the lesson or instruction, and allows the learner to demonstrate their knowledge. Three core principles underscore this practice.

1. **Provide multiple means for engagement**, offering multiple options that support the *why* of learning with a focus on recruiting interest, encouraging persistence, and developing self-regulation.
2. **Provide multiple means for the representation of information**, offering multiple options that support the *what* of learning that focus on perception, language and symbols, and comprehension.
3. **Provide multiple means for action and expression**, offering multiple options that support the *how* of learning and provide options for physical action, expression, and areas for executive function.

Continued on p.4>>>



VALRC offers resources and support to help you build UDL into your instruction or program! Take a look at the [Professional Learning](#) page on our website.

Need some tools so your students have alternative ways to present their assignments? Check out [Tech Tools](#).

“Through the UDL lens, adult educators can consider multiple ways to offer options in how they represent the content, how students demonstrate their understandings, and how students are motivated to learn the material.”

>>>Continued from p.3

In 2008, UDL was officially defined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (20 U.S.C. § 1003(24)). These three principles and the affordances they provide were acknowledged, including for those with disabilities or who are English Language Learners (ELLs). This definition continues to be included in federal policies such as those related to K-12 education, instructional technology, and career and technical education.

Why is UDL Important for Adult Educators?

Through a UDL lens, adult educators can design their instruction in ways that support a wide diversity of learners. Research from the learning sciences has continued to support how differing contexts, learner preferences, developmental stages, and backgrounds can impact how the brain learns (CAST, 2018a). For example, an adult learner in their early twenties may have greater capacity in their working memory than someone in their sixties. An individual entering a classroom from a different country may also have very different cultural and background experiences than learners who grew up in the U.S. system. Watch this [video of Dr. Todd Rose](#) discussing how important variability is when we plan for the learners in our classroom.

Students come to the classroom with a variety of needs, skills, talents, interests, and experiences. For many adult learners, typical curricula are littered with barriers and roadblocks, while offering little support. UDL turns this scenario around by encouraging the design of flexible, supportive curricula that are responsive to individual student variability. Through a UDL lens, adult educators can consider multiple ways to offer options in how they represent the content, how students demonstrate their understandings, and how students are motivated to learn the material.

Consider this scenario:

Maria has her sights focused on developing a business. In her country, she had a completed degree in a related field and had managed a food business. However, when she came to the U.S., she found that her lack of language skills created a significant barrier to her ability to advance. She has signed up for adult education classes to strengthen these skills and to obtain her GED® credential so that she can pursue additional coursework. However, as Maria enters the classroom, she finds that most of the instruction is provided through lecture and relies on a great deal of printed materials.

Through a UDL lens, the instructor might consider blending her lecture with digital presentations that offer more interactivity. Using multiple means of representing the instruction through audio, a YouTube video, or website could expand opportunities to support Maria's understanding. The increasing array of embedded technology supports in many of today's media often include "speech-aloud" functions that can read the text online in English or another language. Video recording that complements content can often provide another means to demonstrate a process that might be quite abstract when presented just through a lecture.

In addition, instead of a large group or traditional classroom lecture, the adult instructor might consider clustering students into smaller groups. This might encourage small group interaction, discussion, and opportunities to personalize topics for individuals. Students might also work in pairs to problem-solve tasks and benefit from each other's perspectives. These adjustments can expand upon the multiple ways to engage students with the content and, in this case, the

classroom environment, as well as foster an important sense of community.

Finally, the adult educator might consider offering multiple ways for the students to demonstrate their knowledge. This, too, may be helpful for other classes that Maria may encounter as she explores future courses in business. Thus, rather than a single test to measure proficiency, perhaps the instructor might allow this student to share a portfolio of her completed work and a collection of various artifacts. If computers are used in the classroom, this could become a digital portfolio and a student might excel in demonstrating their understanding through optional means by sharing a well-crafted PowerPoint, a Prezi, an infographic, or perhaps a video. For students who may have more significant

needs, offering opportunities with digital options expands the reach for those who may rely on the use of assistive technologies or require audio, closed-captioning, or synchronized highlighting to provide the information they are exploring and understanding in different formats.

The UDL approach also focuses on explicitly teaching students the skills they will need to become life-long “expert learners.” UDL improves adult educational outcomes for ALL students by ensuring meaningful access to the curriculum within an inclusive learning environment. The UDL framework includes 3 core principles, 9 guidelines, and 31 checkpoints that can be considered when designing a curriculum or classroom (CAST, 2018b). These are detailed

Continued on p.6>>>



udlguidelines.cast.org | © CAST, Inc. 2018 | Suggested Citation: CAST (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2 [graphic organizer]. Wakefield, MA: Author.

Figure 1. The UDL Guidelines, organized by the 3 principles, 9 guidelines, and 31 educator checkpoints. Retrieved from CAST (2018b). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>

>>>Continued from p.5

across the [UDL Guidelines](#) and provide links to suggested approaches, online examples, and evidence-based research. Consider the visual on page 5.

The UDL framework provides adult educators with a lens for instructional planning that offers guidelines and checkpoints across these three areas. For example, recognizing the value of choice and relevance in a classroom is critical in recruiting student interest. Designing goals that are clearly stated, personalized, and relevant to assignments helps students see the value in the materials they are learning. Re-thinking how materials are presented to students is critical when considering their ability to perceive and comprehend information. Rather than a page of instructions, information might be provided as a graphic organizer that highlights key points through shapes and relationships. Offering a digital space for course materials can also provide content in a format that students can more easily magnify, highlight, or speak aloud.

Advances in technology have provided many opportunities for adult educators to embrace as they design their courses. Some of these are free or low cost. For example, the TextHelp® software tool [Browse Aloud](#) can be incorporated into a website, blog, or online program and provide “speech-aloud” support, translation, and synchronized highlighting. In addition to offering a range of embedded supports, this allows a student who may prefer audio over print to listen to a document online or easily select a language they understand. This also helps them to learn more about the availability of these tools and how they may be of use to them in the future. In fact, Spanish-speaking individuals seeking to explore future careers and related information through the national [O*NET](#) database can now access this tool in [Spanish](#). 

Where Can I Explore More Resources?

The application of UDL across an array of resources and settings can be found in a number of online locations. Below is just a sampling of some that may be of use to adult educators.

- [CAST](#)
- [CAST Free Learning Tools](#)
- [Learning Designed](#)
- [UDL on Campus](#)

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Dr. Frances G. Smith, Educator/ Consultant of Recognizing Differences, LLC, is an innovative educator and implementer of the practices of universal design(s) for learning. She has over 30+ years in instructional and assistive technology—providing direct service to students with disabilities, staff development training to educators, and serving on statewide advisory boards. Dr. Smith has presented on array of topics as a national and international speaker including the importance of universal design for learning.

Using an Experiential Approach to Teach Soft Skills to Beginning Adult Education Learners

by 2019 AE&L Conference Presenter MaryAnn Cunningham Florez

Preparing English language learners for workplace and career success involves not only language development, but also helping learners develop the soft skills they need to meet inherent expectations in the American workplace. Employers regularly cite soft skills as a priority in hiring decisions and as strong factors in job success and advancement. But because soft skills can be culture-bound and not explicit or easily observable, they can be challenging to decipher and master for some. So, it's important to help English learners, including beginning-level learners, understand and develop them.

Most examples of soft-skills lessons, at any level, focus on *talking* about the soft skill. This can be challenging for beginners with limited vocabularies. So, if language is best learned by actively doing things with it, why not take a similar approach with soft skills? An experiential approach, where beginning learners experience soft skills in hands-on, ongoing ways, correlates to good adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) practice for beginners and gives them the time and space to develop soft skills in the safe space that is the adult ESOL classroom.

How can a teacher integrate soft skills in instruction using an experiential approach? I propose that you keep the following three principles in mind.

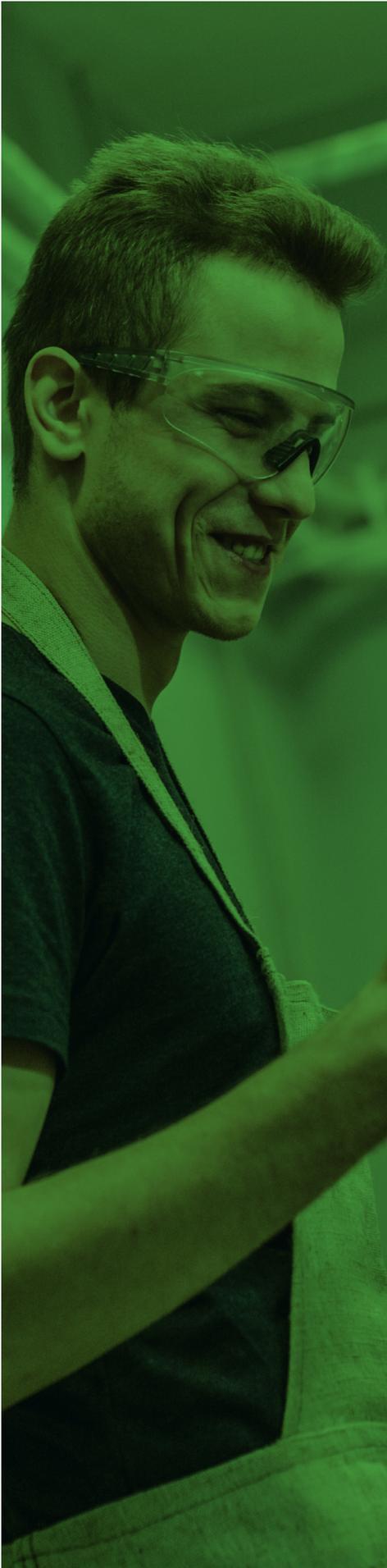
1. Focus on the concrete aspects of soft skills, rather than the abstract.

Instead of thinking about soft skills as big, abstract concepts (interpersonal skills, teamwork, work ethic, etc.)—distill them. What constitutes a good work ethic? What does that look like? What do you see and hear? Work with students to flesh out a soft skill as concrete, real-world actions. Create a reference chart that defines or illustrates it in a more tangible, relatable way.

You can also develop do/say charts that outline actions and language to support a soft skill. The LINCS publication [Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways](#) has some great examples.

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WORK ETHIC

Jose has a good work ethic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He comes to work every day on time. • He is organized. • He finishes his job. • He meets deadlines.
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Remember to model actions and language or provide pictures for your beginning learners in order to increase comprehension; then engage them in dialogues or, even better, role plays, for practice. Once you create reference charts, post them in the classroom or online, or provide them as handouts that students can keep in binders.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS: LISTEN ACTIVELY

Do:	Say:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make eye contact. • Lean forward. • Nod my head. • Smile. • Ask a question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree. • I understand. • Mmmmm or uh-huh • I have a question. • Please tell me more.

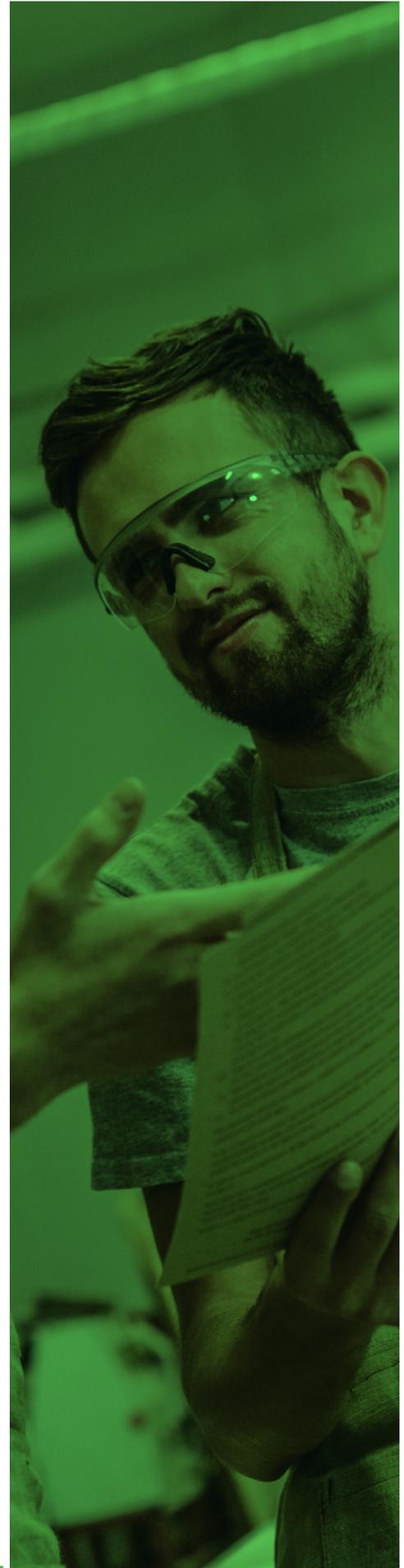
2. Focus routines to integrate soft skills, rather than one-and-done lessons.

Routines are cousins of habits, as well as being a way to lessen the cognitive load of tasks (if students are already familiar with the structure and expectations of a task, they can focus on the elements they don't know, like new vocabulary, grammar, or content). Integrating routines into your instruction could mean including information grids, peer dictation, think-pair-share, or problem-solving frameworks that activate communicative or collaborative soft skills. It could be a "morning message" standard cloze activity that students must copy and complete when they arrive for class and which they must take responsibility for completing if they are late (time management, asking for assistance from colleagues). A ten-minute coffee break time could allow students to practice unstructured or mildly structured small talk. Encourage personal responsibility by having students keep personal calendars (time management) or maintain a personal portfolio of work to demonstrate achievements (self-reflection).

3. Plan for students to actively “do” a soft skill rather than just talk about it.

Nancy Welch, one of the teachers in our program, has developed a task for her beginning-level learners that allows them to experience leadership and communicating effectively in front of a group, rather than just talking about those soft skills. In “Who is the Teacher Today,” a student uses a PowerPoint framework that Nancy provides to lead the class in a series of question/answer and fill-in-the-blank slides. The slides progress from noting today’s date to asking students to compare the class start time to their arrival times, to prompting students to remember to practice a soft skill or element of a soft skill (“Today, I will listen actively. I will ____ eye contact. I will ____ my head. I will ____ a question.”). The frame provides structure for the students to feel confidence and success as they present, yet is flexible enough to accommodate possible variations as the format is re-used. I would suggest that you could also ask students to debrief simply afterwards about their experience as leader and how they think the skills they used could apply in work or daily life.

Provide beginning-level English learners with grounded, first-hand opportunities to experience what soft skills are and how they work and see how powerful it can be! 



MaryAnn Cunningham Florez, M.Ed., is currently the Program Manager for Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program. In more than twenty years in adult education, she has provided professional development and technical assistance to adult educators at the local, state, and national levels. Ms. Cunningham Florez has written a variety of research-to-practice briefs and articles focusing on adult ESOL, has served as author and/or series consultant on various adult ESOL materials and textbooks, and has co-developed a series of adult ESOL teacher training DVDs.



Level, so let's use that as our content example. As well, we know that our students are budget conscious, so let's leverage that! We need a visual prompt that, in a minimalistic manner, poses a question using something familiar.

Everyone can relate to pancakes, right? On the right, we have a box of pancake mix; on the left, we have frozen pancakes. Given this



problem, the next step is for the students, in groups, to begin discussing the dilemma. We want our students to consider what information they have and what information they need. As instructors, we have anticipated some of the most common questions that could be asked or statements our students might make. Maybe we have the information to provide as it is requested, or maybe we ask our students to find what they need on their own. Once our student groups have asked the necessary questions and gathered information, it's time for act two.

This month in **PROGRESS**, we're sharing items that we hope you'll add to your instructor tool kits, so I wanted to be sure to include one of my math favorites. The tool is called "three-act math". It's an approach to mathematics instruction that follows the model of storytelling, originated by [Dan Meyer](#). He offers plenty of information and lessons to share, but many others have contributed to this valuable tool. At the end of this article, I'll include a few links to help you see what's available.

Think about a compelling story, book, or movie. In act one, we are presented with a dilemma. The author wants us to be curious and have questions, giving us just enough information to be engaged. We see something of value, something that connects to us, or something that drives us to continue our inquiry. In a mathematics problem, this engagement and curiosity correlates with the College and Career Readiness Standards Math Practices of making sense of the problem and desiring to persevere through to a solution.



"Act II" is the stage where students build the problem. They should really be making sense of it now, engaging in most of the Standards for Mathematical

Practice. In their groups, the students should be reasoning both abstractly and quantitatively; using structure, tools, and patterns; and finally modeling with mathematics. For our pancake dilemma, we would expect the groups to be building ratios that compare the cost of the mix and the number of pancakes it could make with the cost of the frozen pancakes and the number of those in the box. We'd let them use their own means to build

What would "Act I" look like in practice? Ratios and proportions are an important part of Major Work of the



models that make sense to them. We'd want our student groups to explore questions associated with the problem, but it would be our responsibility as instructors to keep them from going too far off track. When our student groups have mathematical solutions that they are satisfied with and are ready to explain, it's time for act three.



"Act III" is the big reveal. In this third stage, our groups will provide their final answers and justify the answers based on their work and models. It's

ideal if you have two or more groups who have arrived at the same solutions but have used different methods to arrive at those solutions. Part of your job as the instructor in "Act III" is to facilitate critical reflection on the process, allowing groups to correct any mistakes without too much help from you. The reflective activities should also bolster students' confidence in their own mathematics abilities. Finally, act three should be a place where you set up the future. With the right environment, the students should be asking lots of "what if" questions. Maybe you are increasing complexity by adding your own "what ifs." In the case of our pancake dilemma, we would want to have a comparison of the cost of one pancake, or maybe one serving of pancakes, for both the mix and the frozen pancakes. I would hope that somewhere along the line, for the pancake mix, someone would have recognized that the box itself is not the only cost—we also need milk to add to complete the batter and oil or butter to cook the pancakes! I'd also hope that someone would bring the convenience factor into the equation. The frozen pancakes may cost a bit more, but they will take a lot less time. What's the value of our time? All of these thoughts should lead to a vigorous discussion of what exactly a "best deal" is and how mathematics can provide data to inform the answer.

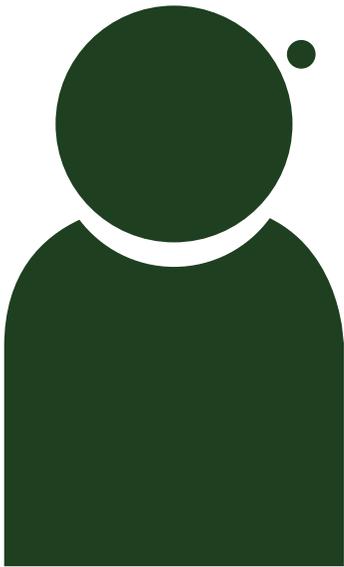
I hope that this has given you some ideas about incorporating three-act math into your instructional toolbox! To give credit where it is deserved, my pancake dilemma example is an adaptation from Dane Elhert's blog, [When Math Happens](#).

As promised, here are a few links to help you get started with three-act math:

- [The Three Acts of a Mathematical Story Blog](#)
- [Dan Meyer's Three-Act Math Tasks](#)
- [Tap Into Teen Minds](#)
- [San Francisco Unified School District Mathematics Department](#)



As the VALRC Adult Academic Programming Specialist, Jeffrey works with Regional Program Managers and other leadership staff to implement regional professional development in accordance with local program needs and goals. Jeffrey also works with programs that have implemented the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) to train new staff and to keep existing staff current with the demands of the NEDP. Under the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) initiative, Jeffrey creates and delivers CCRS-aligned professional development for classroom instructors around the content and practices necessary for completing high school equivalency. Within this scope, his primary focus is mathematics instruction.



HUH?

The Power of Formulating Questions

By 2019 AE&L Conference Presenter Debbie Tuler

One of my first great discoveries as a teacher was the joy of small group work. But first let me confess that I never thought I would be a teacher, as I am introverted and dislike being the center of attention. I remember how anxious I felt in my first class with all the students staring at me! Small group work saved me and made a teaching career possible. Not only did it take the attention away from me, but it also increased the learning and practice for the students.

After 30 years of teaching, attending countless professional development opportunities, and learning and applying new strategies and skills, I recently experienced another “aha” that reminded me that teaching is about not only facilitating others’ learning in the classroom, but also providing the skills so they can continue to learn on their own.

During my career, I have typically asked students questions (to check comprehension or practice language) or given them questions to work through and discuss. I encouraged and invited students to ask questions about things they didn’t understand or wanted to know more about, but I am sure I asked more

than they did. Unfortunately, when teachers ask questions, they are deciding what students will learn and students are looking for the “right” answer—the one the teacher wants—even when there is no one right answer.

Question Formulation Technique

The question formulation technique (QFT), developed by the [Right Question Institute at Harvard University](#), is a technique for teaching students in K-12, adult education, and higher education to ask their own questions. Last spring, I took an in-depth, online introductory course on this topic. QFT scholars developed this technique in response to a discovery during a drop-out prevention program in a working-class and immigrant suburb of Boston. Parents said they did not go into the school or get involved in their children’s education because they didn’t know what questions to ask.

The basis for the technique is that we can encourage and invite questions all we want, but if students (children or adults) don’t know **how** to ask questions (whether in class, at the doctor’s office, in an admissions office, with an insurance company, or during a job interview), then they cannot find out what they really want to know in order to learn or make informed decisions.

I tried QFT both with English learners in a beginner-level class and with instructional staff for professional development. Listed below are the basic steps for using QFT.

Example with Beginning English as a Second Language (ESL):

I used this technique at the beginning of a unit in the *Stand Out 2* textbook as a form of needs assessment, so my question focus was simply the title of the unit—"Food and Nutrition."

Students' priority questions helped me determine which lessons within the unit to focus on and which to skip. I designed activities that built the skills they wanted, including engaging in role plays to practice ordering and asking questions about food in a restaurant, at someone's house, or at a school potluck; reading complex text about nutrition; and writing shopping lists for balanced meals. At the end of the unit, we referred back to the students' questions to decide if they had learned what they wanted (had met their learning goals) and/or had additional

questions, before moving on to another unit.

Why was this so exciting? These students were more engaged than they had been with earlier units in the textbook. They wanted to learn and to do the activities. They were also more engaged than my previous year's class with that same unit. This time, the students talked more and worked harder. They were both focused and lively. Richard Feynman, Nobel prize-winning physicist said, "There is no learning without having to pose a question"*—a reminder that the students need to ask questions in order to learn—they don't learn just by answering my questions.

I did face a couple of challenges using the QFT. One was that it took several times using the technique for students to understand and get used to the idea of producing their own questions. (They were accustomed to me asking them questions!) I also found that the overall process took longer than the suggested time frame laid out in my online training course.

Continued on p.14>>>

Question Formulation Technique Steps

1. Teacher/facilitator provides "Question Focus," such as sentence, topic, quote, video clip, or image.
2. Students/participants produce questions in groups, following four rules (this is divergent thinking).
3. Students/participants follow a protocol to improve their questions.
4. Students/participants prioritize their questions (this is convergent thinking).
5. Students/participants and teacher decide on next steps and take action (these are the learning activities, which are based on what students want to know and learn—great adult learning practice!).
6. Afterwards, students or participants reflect on their learning—a metacognitive skill!

The Right Question Institute provides numerous resources and examples of the technique in content areas of English, social studies, science, and math in K-12, higher education, and adult education. For an [introductory explanation](#) and [template and facilitator guide](#), visit the website.

**From Experiencing the QFT (PowerPoint presentation) in the Right Question Institute's course: Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions*

>>>Continued from p.13

A second challenge was that my ESL students had questions but did not always have the vocabulary or syntax to produce them correctly. For example, one student asked, "What is in this food?". We understood the question, even though we wouldn't normally ask that way. Rather than giving her the word "ingredient" right away, we went on to learn about ingredients in the lesson on nutrition. Afterwards, when we reviewed their initial questions as part of the reflection, the students were able to rephrase the original question as, "What are the ingredients?". This offered a way for me to assess their learning—they were able to rephrase based on what they learned to formulate a better question.

Another time I used this technique, a student asked, "What people do in the community?". Again, we could understand her question, but she did not have the auxiliary "do." Teaching sentence structure is not part of the technique, so I adapted it with a back and forth, having students produce questions (focusing on the idea or concept) and then later using the student-produced questions to teach the syntax. In the case of this example, I did a lesson on using the auxiliary verb so students could correct the question into, "What do people do in a community?". I am going to play around with incorporating this into Step 3, improving questions.

I am energized to begin a new year and really put this technique into practice. On the one hand, it is a very simple set of steps; on the other hand, it is complex in terms of coming up with an effective question focus and prioritizing criteria. How wonderful that even after 30 years, I can be excited and transform my teaching! 📌



Debbie Tuler, ESL Specialist, has been in the field of adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for 30 years, with experience in instruction (all levels), teacher training, curriculum development, and program evaluation. She was part of the state Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) development team. Currently, she teaches high beginner ESOL and facilitates in-house professional development for ESOL staff in her program, Thomas Jefferson Adult and Career Education at Piedmont Virginia Community College, Region 10 (TJACE@PVCC).



Looking for more ways to grow professionally?

Learn more about the professional development offered by VALRC by visiting our [Professional Learning](#) site.

Don't see what you're looking for? Send us an [email](#) and let us know.

Experiencing Learner Disabilities in Adult Education

by 2019 AE&L Conference Presenter Karen E. Ballengee

Educators who attended the 2019 Adult Education and Literacy Conference had the opportunity to visit our Disabilities Awareness Simulation Station. The goal of the simulations was to provide education and resources for those who teach adults with disabilities. The simulations allowed participants to experience the world the way someone with a disability would. Although the exercises do not give you an idea of what a person with a disability experiences over a prolonged period of time, they do highlight some of the barriers learners may face in the classroom. (Note that no two people with the same disability will experience the disability in the same way.)

There were six stations for the simulations representing an array of disabilities—vision impairment, dyslexia, dysgraphia, hearing impairment, and print disability. Participants were asked to complete a typical classroom task while experiencing the disability. [See sidebars for descriptions of each station.] In addition to the stations, activities, news articles, and resources were provided.

Continued on p.16>>>

Stations 1 & 2

Vision Impairment

“Visual impairment (vision impairment, vision disability) is defined as a decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses or medication. Visual impairment can be due to disease, trauma, or congenital or degenerative conditions.”

disabled-world.com

Accommodations

- Make an audio recording of your textbook or materials.
- Discuss what you are writing on the board.
- Face the students while speaking.
- Use readers and scribes for tests.

There were two vision impairment stations. The first station required participants to read a small font with and without the aid of a magnifying sheet. For the second station, the participants could choose a set of goggles that simulated a vision impairment such as cataracts or glaucoma. The students were then asked to copy random letters that were written on a chart on the wall.

When asked for other accommodations that instructors could make for students with a vision disability, participants in the simulation made the following suggestions:

- Large font
- Magnifying glass
- Larger space between lines of print
- Use dark colors for text.
- Use books for the blind or visually impaired.



Participants got to use our vision impairment simulation goggles.

Station 3

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability that refers to a cluster of symptoms which result in people having difficulties with language skills, particularly reading.

[International Dyslexia Association](#)

Signs

- Difficulty in learning letters and their sounds
- Difficulty with spelling
- Trouble organizing written and spoken language
- Difficulty with memorizing number facts

Accommodations

- Give the student verbal instructions.
- Repeat instructions.
- Put text/instructions in audio format.
- Use highlighted text.
- Use text-to-speech software.
- Allow the student to type responses.
- Place the student in a distraction-free setting.
- Allow the student extended time to complete assignments and tests.

At the dyslexia station, the participants were given a paragraph of text and 60 seconds to read the paragraph. Some letters of the paragraph were reversed or transposed, and it contained inconsistent spelling. After 60 seconds, the participants were required to answer questions based on the paragraph.

When asked, "How did this make you feel?" participants responded:

- "Stupid"
- "Empathy for those who experience this"
- "Confused"
- "Frustrated because the words lost meaning when I didn't know them."

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The text on the left simulates how a dyslexic person might spell.

*From WebAim Dyslexia Simulation

>>>Continued from p.15

The simulations described cover just a few examples of disabilities that you may encounter in your program along with some strategies that you may employ in your classroom(s). Do you want to know about some more ways you can help your students with disabilities? Take VALRC's Disabilities and the Adult Learner online course to strengthen your work with adults who have disabilities. Visit the webpage for the [Disabilities and the Adult Learner](#) course to learn more.

There are a variety of resources available on the Internet and in your community. Research, use the resources, and continue to improve the learning environment for all students.

Resources in Virginia

[Virginia Department of the Blind and Vision Impaired](#) provides resources and services to the blind and vision impaired. There are locations throughout the state.

[Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services](#) (DARS) works with community partners to assist older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. DARS even lends assistive technology to those who are eligible.

Adults age 21 to 64 with disabilities had median monthly earnings of \$1,961 compared with \$2,724 for those with no disability.

Station 4

Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is a learning disability in writing. Dysgraphia affects visual-spatial processing, fine motor skills, and language processing skills.

ADDITIDE

Signs

- Illegible handwriting
- Saying words out loud while writing
- Difficulty organizing thoughts on paper
- Difficulty with syntax, structure, and grammar
- Large gap between written ideas and understanding demonstrated through speech

Accommodations

- Allow more time for written tasks.
- Allow students to begin assignments early.
- Allow the student to dictate some assignments or tests.
- Give the student a template in the desired format.

This simulation gave participants an idea of what it feels like when someone's hand will not write what their brain is telling them to write. Participants were given one minute and thirty seconds to write six sentences that represented six levels in the activity. The participants could not advance to the next level until the current sentence was perfect. This activity was made even more difficult when unexpected letters and spacing would appear randomly on the screen. The highest level any of the participants was able to achieve was level four. Needless to say, there were a few frustrated people at this station.

Other Resources

Educational Technology and Mobile Learning Chart with Apps

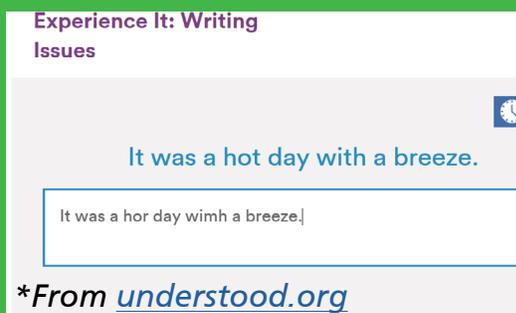
for students with special needs—explores apps that work for students with specific disabilities.

One way to ensure that the classroom is equitable for all learning styles and abilities is to employ the universal design for learning (UDL) framework which is based on scientific research on how humans learn. Successful use of UDL helps to stimulate interest, presents content in different ways, and allows students to present knowledge in different ways. This framework is especially helpful if a student has not disclosed a disability or has not been formally tested for a disability. Universal design for learning can be applied to all students without singling out a particular student or group of students. To learn more about the universal design for learning, visit the [CAST website](#).

“About 56.7 million people.19 percent of the population had a disability in 2010, according to a broad definition of a disability, with more than half of them reporting the disability was severe.”

[U.S. Census Bureau, 2012](#)

Could one of the 56.7 million people with a disability be sitting in your classroom? Based on this statistic, it is likely that you have students with disabilities in your
Continued on p.18>>>



The image on the left is a screen capture of what participants were required to do for this exercise.

**From [understood.org](#)*

Station 5

Hearing Impairment

"Hearing impairment occurs when there is a problem with damage to one or more parts of the ear. The degree of hearing impairment varies from person to person. Hearing loss can happen at birth or later in life."

[TeensHealth from Nemours](#)

Signs

People with a hearing impairment:

- often ask people to repeat what they said;
- don't laugh at jokes because they miss the story;
- may play the radio or television too loud; or
- can't hear the doorbell or telephone.

Accommodations

- Sign language interpreting
- Note taking
- Captioning
- Preferred seating
- Reducing auditory distractions and/or background noise

This activity simulated what it is like to listen to someone speaking in an environment with everyday background noise. Participants were asked to write a list of words given by the narrator. The volume of the narrator's voice went up and down, but the background noise remained consistent.

Participants in the simulation were asked how a hearing impairment can impact a student's success in the classroom.

Hearing impaired students could:

- Miss important instructions.
- Get behind what others are doing.
- Get distracted.

>>>Continued from p.17
classroom right now. Some students may already have been diagnosed with a disability and some students may not even know they have a disability. Some students may know they have a disability but choose not to disclose that information to others. Perhaps the student has a negative attitude toward school or dropped out of school because a disability made learning difficult. As an instructor, it is helpful to understand disabilities in order to create a learning environment that is equitable for students of all ability levels. The simulations that have been provided in this article highlight some common disabilities and describe strategies that can be used to assist students with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. Some types of disabilities are:

- Auditory
- Cognitive
- Neurological
- Physical
- Speech
- Visual

Disabilities may be permanent or temporary and not all disabilities are visible.

Students are not legally required to disclose their disability. If a student



chooses to disclose their disability, they must provide documentation from a trained or medical professional in order to obtain accommodations in the classroom or workplace. It is imperative that instructors maintain the student's privacy concerning the disability. The simulations provided in this article provide suggestions on how to help individuals who have a documented disability and have disclosed their disability.

If you suspect that a student has a disability and you do not have a trained professional able to provide a diagnosis for learners in your program, you can refer them to the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services at (804) 662-7000. The student must be screened by a licensed or medical professional. 

41 percent of those age 21 to 64 with any disability were employed, compared with 79 percent of those with no disability.



Karen Ballengee serves as the Assistant Instructional Technology Specialist at VALRC. She holds an M.Ed. in instructional technology, a B.A. in music education, and a certificate in graphic design technology. Karen works to improve the accessibility of VALRC resources, creates graphics, and assists with eLearning, website, and technology projects.

Station 6

Print Disability

Someone with a print disability is a "person who cannot effectively read print because of visual, physical, perceptual, developmental, cognitive, or learning disability."

George Kerscher, pioneer in digital talking books, from [National Center for Learning Disabilities Policy Brief](#)

Signs

- Difficulty learning letters and their sounds
- Difficulty with spelling
- Trouble organizing written and spoken language

Accommodations

- Provide a reader for the test-taker.
- Provide a quiet area for reading activities.
- Provide extended time for assignments.
- Give instructions in bold print.
- Color code tests by sections or subjects.

In this activity, participants got an idea of how difficult it is to read print because of a visual, physical, perceptual, developmental, cognitive, or learning disability. Participants were asked to read the names of the colors on the page. This may seem easy, but the name of the color and the color of the text were not the same. For example, the word orange was printed in purple text.

Participants were asked about their experience with this activity and why it was so difficult.

- "Took a lot of thought=slow in reading"
- "Focus is important"
- "Needed extra concentration"
- "Impeded fluency, reading speed"
- "Difficult, had to block the meaning"

YELLOW BLUE ORANGE

**from [Disabilities Awareness Packet](#) by Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus*

This image represents a simulation of a print disability.



Technology in the Classroom

by 2019 AE&L Conference Presenters Ericka Mbachu and Charita Eley

Engaging learners with the use of technology in the classroom can be overwhelming when you are not sure of the resources that are available to you. At the recent Adult Education and Literacy conference, we introduced instructors to resources that can be used to engage classes and meet the needs of individual learners. We would like to share a few technology resources that will aid in classroom instruction.

Why is it important?

The use of technology in the classroom allows instructors to use resources that engage different learning styles. Learners who are struggling are able to participate in different learning activities that are designed specifically for their learning needs while working at their own pace. Integrating technology into the adult classroom encourages collaboration among learners. They can connect with each other outside of class or even with learners who live in other areas. It also allows learners to prepare to face technology in the workplace, increase soft skills, and engage in learning tasks in a new way. Instructors can use grading software, communication platforms, and activities to save time on planning. The time saved on planning can allow instructors more time to work with students.

There are many free and subscription-based resources available to instructors. Here are a few that we use.

General Classroom Platform

[Edmodo](#) is a classroom platform that instructors can use to communicate with learners and share learning activities and materials. Learners can also post their assignments and access materials on-the-go. Edmodo is available for free and allows instructors to invite students to the class. This platform may be used in place of Google Classroom. Instructors can post videos, quizzes, and announcements. Learners can then message the instructors and view their grades.

Reading Resources

[CommonLit](#) provides instructors with a library of free reading passages to support literacy development. The passages are geared towards learners who are reading at levels equivalent to grades 3 to 12. Instructors can create a few accounts and browse reading material by book, genre, theme, or grade level. Guiding questions can be assigned and tracked to assess student comprehension. To support struggling readers, students can use a read-aloud function. CommonLit also offers Google Classroom Integration. We have used reading passages on CommonLit to provide students with discussion points on issues presented in class or to help build background knowledge when reading novels. A search of the book or novel that our students are reading will reveal several related reading passages.

[Newsela](#) offers free and paid subscriptions to reading passages. Each passage is published at five different reading levels, allowing instructors to personalize to their specific classes. Newsela specializes in publishing reading passages that cover current events, primary resources, and different subject areas. We typically use Newsela articles when presenting current events. We have used this to introduce learners to topics we would like to discuss in class. For example, a search on 9/11 will provide instructors with many related articles. We then assign those articles based on our students' reading levels. Newsela offers great integration between different subject areas!

Other Resources

[Kahoot!](#) is an excellent resource to engage learners in competitive game play while learning. Kahoot! is a free resource that offers a question bank covering all subject areas. Learners will compete against each other to answer multiple-choice questions. Instructors can also input their own questions. Instructors may choose to have their students work in groups or individually. Kahoot! may also be assigned as homework to reinforce new concepts and can be used to test student knowledge on an array of different categories.

[FlipGrid](#) is a video app. Students and instructors can create short videos. Instructors can allow students to respond to other students' videos or keep videos private. Instructors may use this resource to facilitate discussions, book talks, and introductions. Grades can also be posted online.

There are many resources instructors may use to enhance learning in the classroom. Many websites offer free resources and paid subscriptions. A Google search of instructional technology resources will aid instructors with integrating technology. 📌



Ericka Mbachu is an educational innovator who enjoys sharing her love of learning with anyone she meets. Ericka joined Piedmont Regional Adult & Career Education Programs in 2017 and currently works as a GED® instructor and Educational Coordinator.



Charita Eley is an educator who is making the difference in the lives of learners. Charita has been teaching for over 12 years in the public-school system and has been a GED® instructor for over 6 years. Currently, Charita is a Reading Resource teacher for Fairfax County Public Schools and a GED® instructor for Piedmont Regional Adult & Career Education Programs.



Learn more about these tools and how you can use them in your classroom by going to VALRC's online resource [Technology for Teachers](#).

Then, stay tuned each month as we highlight a new tool in our Tech Tuesdays—simply follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [LinkedIn](#) or sign up for our [VAELN email blast!](#)



FREE Economic Empowerment Curriculum Coming in November

by Dr. Cheryl A. Ayers

Guided by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the primary goal of the U.S. Economic Empowerment Project is to offer a retroactive opportunity for disenfranchised, marginalized, low socioeconomic, and low educational attainment adults in all 50 states to learn basic economics, personal finance, and entrepreneurship. These three content areas are important in preparing all Americans to make informed decisions as fiscally responsible adults and productive participants in the U.S. workforce and economy. Ultimately, the project aims to be a part of the solution in reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth in impoverished areas across the United States by developing a more inclusive, economically empowered citizenry that is equipped to take full advantage of U.S. economic freedoms and opportunities.

To assist in accomplishing this goal, Dr. Cheryl A. Ayers created a customizable Economic Empowerment Citizen Seminar curriculum for adults to learn basic knowledge and skills in economics (e.g., scarcity, resources, choices, opportunity costs, markets, cost-benefit analysis, economic way of thinking), personal finance (e.g., financial goals, budgeting, reducing expenses, smart spending choices, saving, banking, debit and credit cards, credit scores, payday loans, debt management, identity theft), and entrepreneurship (e.g., earning additional income, entrepreneur skills assessment, market opportunities, easy small business ideas, business plan basics). This highly flexible, interdisciplinary curriculum weaves basic economic concepts and skills throughout the personal finance and entrepreneurship content for more informed and empowered decision-making.

A culminating, personalized action plan guides simple yet impactful next steps toward securing a more prosperous future. Other distinguishing features of the curriculum include:

- Workforce preparation instruction that is interactive, non-intimidating, and confidence-building
- Common statewide recruitment tool for more in-depth programs and courses
- Field-tested materials based on economic education research, best practices, and adult learning standards
- Multifunctionality as a standalone program, easy integration into existing adult education curricula for real-world contexts, and one-on-one counseling sessions.

Dr. Ayers chose Virginia to pilot the Economic Empowerment Citizen Seminar curriculum and accompanying train-the-trainer professional development program, which was held on September 28, 2018, at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. More than 65 adult service providers from across Virginia attended the training from a variety of organizations including the VDOE Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education; The Workforce Development Boards; The Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services; The Department of Corrections; The Department of Veterans Services; Goodwill Industries; immigrant services; community colleges; people with disabilities agencies; community-based literacy organizations; family literacy programs; and other like-minded partners. Following are training evaluation excerpts:

- *"The mission of the project is critical to the empowerment of the people in my city, and I believe across our country. The low-income populations have been*

done a great disservice in their minimal understanding of the way the economy works. This program, PowerPoint, and training are a HUGE step and a giant leap forward in better serving our communities”

- *“I coach people who are unemployed or underemployed breakdown [sic] barriers and find work. This course will profoundly change the way I approach the challenges that face my participants. For example, the economic choices are really the drivers of their barriers in most cases. The tools provided will give me a new way to address their challenges.”*
- *“This program was enlightening! It provides a way to assist my clients with new and creative ideas. The introduction to economics is priceless! I can now assist my clients with a more broad [sic] view of their finances. The in-depth presentation of entrepreneurship will be a life-long gift to my clients. It may be the key to keeping them out of poverty and/or securing the next generation.”*

After the training, grant-funded mini-grants were awarded to participating adult education and workforce development practitioners to beta-test the curriculum in Manassas, Keysville, Roanoke, and Richmond, Virginia. One mini-grant recipient, Ms. Leslie Bradner, Instructor of Psychology and Adult Basic Education at Southside Virginia Community College, reflected on her curriculum experiences by sharing,

The first time I presented the Economic Empowerment Seminar I used the curriculum in its entirety. Our attendees ranged from a 19-year-old GED® student to an 89-year-old who wanted to learn more about her finances because her husband ‘handles that.’ The economics section provided a solid foundation for the personal finance section with its interactive budgeting and decision-making exercises. What excited the attendees the most, though, was the exploration of entrepreneurship. They were genuinely excited by the possibility of making more

income using their own talents and time. They enthusiastically brainstormed ideas for ways to fill the service gaps in their community. Since the seminar, I have been using the curriculum in my adult education classes. 90% of the economics material my students need is covered. I also use the personal finance section to teach math skills in a relatable context. For example, the students enjoy seeing what even small, incremental changes in their savings allowance can become over the long term. They all enjoy working with the Economic Empowerment materials because it is approachable and engaging.

Also a mini-grant recipient, Ms. Courtney Lord, Workforce Development and Curriculum Specialist with Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington Hogar Immigrant Services noted, “I first started using the curriculum as a one-day workshop for the immigrant community. The curriculum is flexible enough to be scaffolded and modified to meet the needs of any learner. Hogar Immigrant Services now not only provides one-day workshops, also integrates the curriculum into the GED® test preparation courses and one-on-one coaching sessions.” Ms. Lord and Ms. Bradner also co-presented a session at the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Conference in July 2019, highlighting the curriculum’s instructional flexibility and learning standards alignment.

Dr. Ayers will be delivering the curriculum training in two more states and making the revised curriculum available to all Virginians free-of-charge in November 2019.

The project is funded by the Calvin K. Kazanjian Economics Foundation. 



Dr. Cheryl A. Ayers is the Founder and Director of the U.S. Economic Empowerment Project, Senior Research Specialist at the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia, Co-Director of the Center for Economic Education at Virginia Tech, and Economic Education and Research Consultant.

Community-Based Literacy Organizations Find Professional Growth Opportunities at the AE&L Conference

by 2019 AE&L Conference Advisory Committee Member Victoire Gerkens Sanborn

"I especially enjoyed the opportunity to network with other CBLOs at the [AE&L] conference, to air challenges unique to CBLOs and share resolution ideas and resources."

– Joyelle M. Saunders, Executive Director, Peninsula READS



The Virginia Literacy Foundation (VLF) served as the featured partner of the 2019 AE&L conference. This partnership between VALRC and VLF helped us to learn more about each other and learn together!

Since 2017, the Virginia Literacy Foundation (VLF) has actively focused on one of its prime objectives for community-based literacy organizations (CBLOs)—that of developing or identifying “innovative approaches and best practices to improve literacy instruction and strengthen delivery of literacy services.” The various ways the VLF achieves this objective include professional development (PD) and program improvement initiatives, which encourage CBLOs to help adult students achieve their literacy goals. In recent years, the VLF has partnered with VAACE (Virginia Association of Adult and Continuing Education) and this year with the AE&L Conference, sponsored by the VDOE (Virginia Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education) to promote partnership-building and increased professional development opportunities for VLF-funded programs.

While these partnership conferences typically attract the same number of CBLO staff and volunteers (around 50), opportunities for attending workshops have increased from an average of 12-17 workshops (VLF conference only) to 80 or more (partner conferences). This change has not only provided more workshops for staff and volunteers, but also increased occasions for them to meet people from a mix of statewide programs as well as view resources from a variety of vendors. The overall reactions to the partnership conferences has been positive.

When speaking about the 2019 AE&L Conference in particular, Lisa Harris, a long-term program coordinator from Literacy Volunteers of Campbell County Public Library remarked

*“As a staff member of a small CBLO (two members strong!), there is often little time to stop and reflect on how we do things in our organization and areas where we can improve. The conference workshops provide valuable information about topics relevant to us. My colleague and I will attend different classes, so in the evening and on the drive home, we share what we have learned with one another. If we come away with at least one good idea to incorporate into our everyday practices, then we consider the conference time well spent. I love workshops focused on the heart of our organization...our volunteers! I found several take-away ideas in Jen Mora Zuniga’s **Increasing Board Engagement** and Ellen Osborne’s **Satisfaction Guaranteed: Let’s Keep Our Volunteers on the Job.**”*

Joyelle M. Saunders, the Executive Director (E.D.) at Peninsula READS since January, and an experienced grantwriter, fundraiser, and E.D. at other nonprofits, found networking with E.D.s from literacy programs and regional program managers extremely valuable. She notes that

“As a fairly new executive director of a CBLO, I’m beginning to understand that expanding our community impact will only happen as we expand our partnerships with adult education and other comparable agencies to serve those low-level literacy learners whose skill level leaves them just out of the range of eligibility for programming offered by our partners. I found the AE&L Conference to be quite valuable to our partnership efforts. It afforded me the opportunity to learn about various programs, policies and trends affecting our partners and to brainstorm ways we as a CBLO can support low-level literacy learners, serving as a bridge to higher level programming that will help them reach their educational, employment, and general lifestyle goals. I especially enjoyed the opportunity to network with other CBLOs at the conference, to air challenges unique to CBLOs and share resolution ideas and resources.”

The CBLO Think Tanks that were scheduled at the end of Wednesday’s and Thursday’s workshops were well attended and replete with lively discussions, resource sharing, and insights. By the end of the second Think Tank, it was clear that participants had exchanged contact information and considered each other “comrades-in-arms.” Ned Stewart, the new director from Charlotte Adult Learning Center, summarizes his experience:

“When I went to the AE&L Conference, I was only a couple of weeks into the job as Executive Director of my local organization. It turned out to be a great coincidence. The conference helped me define more precisely in my mind what our organization should be/could be doing. This was most helpful. But the most helpful thing happened the last day of the conference. Several of my tablemates

and I realized that we all had been in most of the same breakout sessions together, which meant we probably were facing similar circumstances back home. Since the others were more experienced administrators from larger, more developed centers, I knew that I would be calling the telephone numbers I harvested pretty regularly.”

To learn more about the Virginia Literacy Foundation and its support of the AE&L Conference, visit the [AE&L Conference website](#). 



Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is a Literacy Consultant with the Virginia Literacy Foundation. She is a valued specialist in the literacy field who facilitates workshops in grant writing, strategic planning, train the trainer, board development, marketing and outreach, tutor training, technology training, and reading comprehension strategies.



Access • Equity • Opportunity

Thank you to all who participated in the 2019 AE&L Conference! We appreciate all that you did to make it such a great success!

- 417 registrants
- 96 presenters
- 71 workshops
- 14 Advisory Committee members
- 13 exhibitors
- 3 keynote speakers
- 1 good time
- Unlimited learning

From the VDOE



VALRC wants to share what you are doing. Join the AEFLWeek conversation on our Facebook and Twitter sites! We plan to highlight various initiatives throughout the week. Let's show how important our work in adult education and literacy is!



SAVE THE DATE!

2020 AE&L Conference is moving up...
(in the calendar that is.)

February 19-21, 2020

Brand new, luxurious hotel and conference center:

**Hotel Madison
Shenandoah Valley Conference Center
Harrisonburg, VA**

Stay tuned for our innovative program designed to support this year's theme:

2020 Vision for the Future!

September is the time to celebrate all that you and our programs do for adult education and workforce development in Virginia!



Adult Education & Family Literacy Week

Adult Education and Family Literacy Week is September 22-28. This week focuses on celebrating the work of adult education and highlights the student success stories that bring our work to life in our communities. The COABE AEFL week webpage has ideas and resources to help you celebrate and share your work. We hope you will find ways to celebrate your students, your staff, and your partners!

September is also Workforce Development Month, a time to recognize the work of those who assist neighbors and other community members in finding employment and reskilling opportunities to advance in their current jobs or to change careers. Adult education and literacy programs play an important role in these efforts by helping to ensure that individuals build their academic, workforce preparation, and English language skills as they also work to build their occupational and technical skills. Our programs are often the first point of entry for folks starting on a new career pathway, and your work to help participants realize the array of services that the Virginia Career Works system has available is critical to their success.

We hope you will use these two spotlights to shine a bright light on the great work that your program is doing and celebrate the many practitioner and student success stories in your community. ✓

This article was prepared by the staff of the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education.

A United Voice



by Amy Shockley, VAACE President-Elect

The Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) is holding its annual conference October 22-23, 2019, at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton, VA. Lodging is conveniently located at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Hampton Hotel Convention Center and Spa.

The theme of this year's conference is "Adult Ed ADVOCATES!" The keynote presentation on Tuesday morning will focus on Advocacy and the many roles involved to make it work. Not everyone has to be good at talking to politicians! There are behind-the-scenes roles, too!

Here are just a few of the breakout sessions that will be offered:

- Student Ambassadors as Advocates
- Getting Started with Google's Applied Digital Skills (a free resource)
- GED® Test-Taking strategies
- The 2020 Census and Adult Education in Virginia

A highlight of the VAACE conference is the VAACE Awards luncheon. All current-VAACE members can nominate colleagues for an award in one of five categories: 1) Outstanding Adult Ed Leadership Award; 2) Joan E. D. Kushnir Teacher of the Year Award; 3) Volunteer of the Year Award; 4) Outstanding Workplace Education Partnership Award; or 5) Support Staff Award. Award nominations are due by September 29.

All registration and workshop proposal information and the VAACE Award nomination form can be found on the [VAACE website](#). Click the tab **2019 VAACE Conference: Adult Ed Advocates!** 

From VALRC



"Equipping the field of adult education and literacy with essential skills and resources"

VALRC Welcomes New Staff

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



▼ **KATHERINE HANSEN**

Communications & Community Engagement Specialist

Katherine Hansen brings to this new specialist role decades of global inter-cultural communications, business development, and teaching experiences that bridge the academic, nonprofit, and corporate worlds. At VALRC, she provides specialized professional education, intervention, and outreach services in the area of adult education and literacy through creating and developing new programs, initiatives, and events. She designs and delivers training, as well as provides coordination and project management including multiple aspects of a comprehensive communications and marketing program. Katherine holds an M.Ed. in adult learning from VCU with a specialization in human resource development and a business management degree. She is also a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and holds a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) from Cambridge University.



▼ **ELIZABETH SEVERSON-IRBY**

Literacy Specialist

Elizabeth Severson-Irby succeeds Vic Sanborn as VALRC's Literacy Specialist, providing 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. These activities include providing information and guidance on adult literacy topics and projects to adult education programs, as well as designing and providing professional development, mentoring, coaching and training, and other related support to adult educators statewide. Elizabeth holds an M.Ed. in special education from VCU and an endorsement in Adult Education and Literacy; she is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in education from VCU.

VALRC Working for You

We are currently running three fall professional development courses:

ESOL Basics

8-week course runs: 9/09-11/03

Disabilities and the Adult Learner

6-week course runs: 9/09-10/20

Foundations of Reading: Print Skills (Pilot)

5-week course runs: 9/30-11/03

If you missed fall enrollment, take a look at the calendar (p. 30) for what's coming this winter.

Also recent:

- ✓ Live-stream webinar on "[TABE 11&12 Best Practices Webinar for Virginia](#)" 9/24
- ✓ New links on [Reading Passages and Lessons!](#)
- ✓ Webinar on "[CASAS Reading & Math GOALS series](#)" 9/18 and monthly
- ✓ Hillary Major leads the Virginia Team at Teaching Skills That Matter in Adult Education pilot training. 9/11-13



Virginia's Teaching Skills that Matter (TSTM) pilot team at national training in November: Hillary Major from VALRC, Mary Cherry from Southside Virginia Community College Transitional Programs, Lyle Ring from the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP), Sarah Lupton from Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Adult Education, and Becky Payton from Thomas Jefferson Adult and Career Education @PVCC

Don't miss out on what VALRC is doing for you! Follow us on



2019 PROGRESS CALENDAR

OCT

Watch for it! National Study of Implementation of Adult Education Provider Survey from American Institutes for Research (AIR), Adult Education Research and Technical Assistance Center (AERTAC)

2-4 [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics \(NCTM\)](#)
Nashville, TN

4 Understanding Grant Rubric Feedback
(1:00-2:00 p.m.)

8-9 [National Council for Workforce Education \(NCWE\)](#)
San Antonio, TX

8-11 [American Association for Adult and Continuing Education \(AAACE\) Conference](#)
St. Louis, MO

17 Distance Education Webinar
(1:00-2:00 p.m.)

18 [Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium Conference \(MERC\)](#)
Richmond, VA

21-10 NOV [Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions: Best Practices in the Question Formulation Technique](#)
Online Course from Harvard/Right Question Institute

22-23 [VAACE Conference](#)
Hampton, VA



NOV

TBD Sector Strategies and Career Pathways Academy Regional Events

4-6 [Family Learning Conference](#)
Louisville, KY

11-13 [National College Transition Network \(NCTN\) Conference](#)
Cambridge, MA

14 Distance Education Webinar
(1:00-2:00 p.m.)

14-16 [National Science Teaching Association \(NSTA\) Area Conference](#)
Cincinnati, OH

18 Program Manager Webinar
(1:30-3:00 p.m.)

18-22 [Association on Higher Education and Disability® \(AHEAD\) Accessible Media, Web, and Technology Conference](#)
Westminster, CO

21-24 [National Council of Teachers of English \(NCTE\) Convention](#)
Baltimore, MD



DEC

4-6 [Hire Education Conference](#)
Hot Springs, VA

4-7 [Association for Career and Technical Education \(ACTE\) Conference](#)
Anaheim, CA

23-JAN3 VCU Winter Closing (VALRC offices closed)



JAN

27 [VALRC Winter Term Begins](#).
Facilitated Online Courses

FEB

19-21 Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Conference (AE&L)
Harrisonburg, VA

MAR

30 [VALRC Spring Term Begins](#).
Facilitated Online Courses

APR

5-8 [Coalition on Adult Basic Education \(COABE\) Conference](#)
Baltimore, MD