



Voices from the Field: Connecting English Language Learners to High School Equivalency Opportunities in Adult Education Transcript

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Welcome to the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center's *Voices from the Field* episode on connecting English language learners to high school equivalent equivalency opportunities in adult education programs. My name is Hali Massey, and I'm the ESOL Specialist at the Resource Center.

I'm Elizabeth Severson-Irby, the Literacy Specialist at the Resource Center.

And today we are joined by three panel members from across the state, and they are going to introduce themselves. Hi, I'm Carol Coffey, and I'm the Director of TJACE, which is the adult education program in Region 10, the Charlottesville area.

Hi, I'm Laura Hardy, and I'm an ESL instructor in Region 21 (Virginia Beach/Newport News).

Hello, I'm Shekera Alvarado, Regional Program Manager for Northern Virginia region adult education program.

Host: To get our discussion started, we wanted to start by focusing on kind of transitioning English language learners from ESOL classes, so classes that are specifically for building English language proficiency into high school equivalency classes. So to start off, what strategies does your program use to provide information and education on what high school equivalency is, and it's important for college and career goals?

Shekera: So I can kick us off with that one. This is Shekera. In our region, we have multiple programs who typically do the same sort of process when introducing ELLs to HSE. And that starts in the orientation phase, when students come into the programming and trying to understand, you know, we're trying to understand what their goals are, and they're trying to explain where they want to be and what they want to do. So we started an orientation phase, where we're explaining what all of our program offerings are, from the different levels of an ELL up to HSE. We even have a bridging program, and one of our localities that basically combines

the two. So higher level ELLs can transition into HSE through this program. So those are the sorts of things that we highlight when we have ELL students who are interested in going into HSE.

Carol: So I'll just chime in on top of, to add to what Shekera was saying, similarly, we really rely on intensive orientation sessions, where we spend significant time after someone is taking their assessment, looking at what where they want to go what their career pathway would be, and then showing the pathways that we have built within TJACE to help folks either move into workforce programs or into credit programs at the college, and where that high school credentialing fits into that pathway. So we've spent quite a bit of time mapping out our own programs into career pathways that would match up with the career and academic goals of the students. And then, and it's really great, because then we can sort of just we have the visual of it, and we and we just map it out for them. You know, we really try in all of our outreach and advertising to really talk about the importance of the credential. Most people identify TJACE as the place you would go to get the GED® or the NEDP as your as your high school credential, so it's in our mission, everything we put out that would talk about our program has that as its core and the value of it. So anytime we talk to agencies or groups in, you know, external, in the community, that that's just going to be just going to be there. And that we are predominantly a language learner organization. Most of our folks are language learners. You know, it's embedded in what we do for language learners as well as anybody else.

Laura: And our region handles that very similar to the other two ladies, just all those initial contacts with our learners are the ones who would be advising and acting as career coaches.

Host: Well, thank you all for those suggestions and strategies. I think, you know, really starting off in the beginning like you are mentioning at orientations having it as part of your branding, and then also really highlighting the full career pathway and how, Carol like you said, how the HSE fits into that all sounds very important for highlighting what HSE is for English language learners. To transition to our next question, we want to think a little bit, kind of like, from the other side of it, what strategies does your program use to identify ELLs who have the goal of pursuing their high school equivalency? And how have those strategies proven to be effective?

Shekera: Well, I'll, this is Shekera again. I'll go ahead and chime in here. I think, I want to say back in the day, there was a huge emphasis on goal setting for our students. And it's while we still consider it very important, it's not a requirement any longer. But it is something that we still use in our go back to orientation. When we are first meeting with students, we want to identify what their goals are. And I'm glad that Laura mentioned career coaches, because that's something that we are invested in heavily in our region, to provide a career coach to each of our programs, our ESOL, and HSE programs to ensure that they have someone contacts, each student has a contact to be able to reach out to and review their goals, figure out what the next step is what their individual pathway looks like. So I think that's a strategy that we're really starting to focus on is making sure there is a specific contact for each student to be able to address their individual, their individual goals.

Carol: So in Region 10, we also are relying more and more on career coaches, we're investing in that as well as a contact point. But we're also trying to really empower our teachers, because they're the ones that establish the relationships with their students. So we spent quite a bit of time revamping our onboarding process, this past fall, where we are spending a significant amount of time from the beginning. We have a checklist and of course, this is one of the big things that's part of that checklist. And then we're really emphasizing that our teachers look over that checklist and become familiar with what the career goals are of each of their students. And, you know, understand what that pathway is. So they can keep that in mind as their instruction unfolds. And also, as they're encouraging, and helping students to see what their next steps are. We're paying more attention to this. Everybody, you know, teachers get, because they're awesome and they're amazing. They're so passionate about their actual instruction, they get really lost in that, which I love. You know, I'm really happy about that. But sometimes it's easy to forget about them that that bigger picture of how is this fitting into that student's next step? And so we're really trying to do cultural things within our organization to make sure we're paying more attention to what the next step is, and are we doing everything we can at this step, to make sure that person's getting where they want to go. And it's also like the career coaches, I think, come in really handy, because we're also having to do some needs analysis, from the work from our partners in the community to try to find out what really what requires the HSE? Where is it really required? Because it's not easy to get, as we all know. And, you know, some folks, we have a lot of folks that come that have already have advanced degrees in their own country, right. You know, if they need if they have to get the HSE quickly to access some further education and training. You know, we want to just, you know, be sure we understand that and that we're putting them in the right intervention that we have the right program that we have to do that as quickly as possible. Others are, you know, maybe it's interesting, maybe they're wanting to advance into HSE classes, just because they want more knowledge and they want to build their English skills in that context. And they may not be as focused on the credential itself. So you know, kind of have both of those things going on in our program.

Laura: Well, our program, this is one area that we are trying to work on and make improvements. There are plans to train ESL instructors to be NEDP assessors. And that's one strategy. And then the other is there's going to be a pilot class starting a Spanish GED® class that we're going to be offering with instructors that have some Spanish background or language, as well.

Carol: So I was just going to add that one, you know, like one of the things we're doing is we're looking at, we are looking at going back and looking at scores to see who's scoring, in the ELL population, to see scoring high, you know, for to just reach out to them and say, you know, we think he would be a strong candidate to get this credential article into NEDP. Is the other program we really are looking at building. Is that something that interests you, you know, let's talk more about it. And we also are taking their students on tours of the community college, because we're part of the community college. So even at the lower levels, like at level two, we have five levels of ESL, so at our level two, we start doing tours of the college, well, we haven't for the last little bit, but we have in the pass and plan to do it again, tours, and they go up to the campus, and they get IDs, and they go to the library and get library access. And then we and then we can talk about we have folks talking with them about now if you want to come here,

what what do you have to have to get into college, you know, and so of course, the HSE is always part of that conversation, to be able to access the financial aid in particular. So we try to start it, knowing that some of our language learners are with us for years, you know, they're with us for years. So we will try to start it early. Like, this is how the American education system works, because of course, they don't, they don't know, you know that you have to have this high school credential to access, you know, something, but so we try to make sure they're aware of it so they can build it into their plans.

Shekera: Carol, I think that is so smart. I love that idea of doing tours. So I'm going to see if I can borrow that, thank you. But I think you're hitting it exactly on the head with as far as the fact that we need to continue to build awareness for these students. And to remind them because so many of our ELLs are in our programs for years, it takes a while, you know, especially if you're starting at beginning literacy, it takes a while to get from one through six levels, one through six, and then up into to be ready to be into the HSE, especially for you know, RLA, reading language arts, subjects and math. So definitely building awareness for our students is top of mind, making sure we're keeping it top of mind for them, reminding them even you know, your ultimate goal is this. So this is where we need to be, you know, this is the next step that we need to take. And I also wanted to add that we are also we do also have an NEDP program in our region, and we are looking to really regionalize that. So we are training our instructors, at least one or two from each program to be familiar with the NEDP program so that when they have students come into their registration session, they're able to speak to that program and give them alternative options to getting their HSE.

Just want to add, I think it's Carol, I think it was mentioned, it's so important to understand where the learners are in their journey and where they want to go. I think that's huge. You know, in my opinion, When I've seen working with students as an ESL kind of a coach for some of the workforce programs that we do, they really need to have that high level of English to succeed if they're going to go into a pharmacy tech program, or the community college programs. And my concern, you know, how do you steer them to the right program, because the NEDP, sorry, I was get the acronym mixed up, you know, that may not give them what they need to have success in a college, you know, curriculum and that path. So I really worry about and want to help them with that language and understanding. And so I think if they can get through the GED® program, they're going to be very equipped, or better equipped to handle college. So understand where I think that's a huge part of it is understanding, do they just want to have better language and get a better job? Or do they really want to pursue a college degree?

Carol: I think that's a great point so far. Thanks for you know, putting it in that perspective of once again, looking at the whole thing the through the learners lens. You know, I love that your the way you articulated that.

Host: Well, there's so much shared there. Thank you. Thank you all for all of that. Some of the things that I heard was individualized goal setting and incorporating that into the classroom. And also, you know, working with community and employment partners, Carol, I really appreciated

that really understanding what you know when learners are going to need this and how they might need it and how that works into their goal setting process. And then using data to reach out to learners who might be ready for it, but don't know, you know, may not be aware of the opportunity. Career Coaches and, Laura, thank you so much for bringing up the Spanish GED®, because that's an excellent point as well. You know, there may be learners who are ready to pursue the GED® in Spanish, if that's their home language. And that's a great opportunity for them. So thank you all for all of the suggestions. And you know, Carol, you started to touch a little bit on the classroom. And that kind of transitions us into the next question we have, of what instructional strategies are integrated into your ESL classes, to provide support to learners who may be interested in pursuing their HSE? So I know Carol touched on that a little bit. Of course, Carol, if you want to elaborate on that, or if anyone else has anything else to share, as far as integrating into the classroom.

Carol: Well, I can just add to what I said earlier, is one of the we years ago, we just opened up basically our GED® classes to ESL learners that just raised their hand and we're interested in with not paying as much attention as we should to whether they were actually ready to be successful in those classes. And so we revamped when we did our career pathway, internal career pathway map. For with our classes, we revamped it. And we decided as a program that what was happening is we were getting language learners into the GED® classes and they weren't ready, and the GED® teachers were not equipped to deal with it. And so it's just a lose, lose all around. So we decided we were going to force language learning before they had access, basically, to the higher level classes. And we were going to start incorporating GED® topics into that higher level language learning program. So we, what we found is that it's the RLA and social studies that are problems for a lot of our language learners. And so at our level four, I think I told you earlier, we have five levels at our level for we use the our GED®, social studies, textbook and curriculum, and it's integrated into our level four ESL instruction. So we know folks are starting to get GED® instruction. But really, the focus is still on learning the language, you know, it's just this context has been added with social studies. And so um, that's, that's, that's working. I mean, it was a little bit of a bumpy start to it. Because, you know the language learners were wanting to get their GED® and wanting to get it quickly. And of course, we want to help that happen. But the reality is, you got to learn the language, as Laura was saying earlier, you got to learn the language. And, we just don't have enough to instructors have two layers of GED® classes. So we, you know, they're being mixed in with people who know the language, you can't slow them down. They're also very anxious to get their GED®. Anyway, it's just working out, it's working out well, we also offer them the opportunity to take our GED® to go program. So what I say to them is like, look, we really want you to learn, you know, really master the language first, not master, we want you to get to a certain proficiency level with the language first, so you can be successful, and you can go through these classes much more quickly.

But if you're interested in learning about the GED®, and what's on the GED®, you know, in addition to the social studies that you're going to get at your level four, we are going you know, we'll sign you up for our GED® to go and you can play around with that on your own. You know, you can go in and start learning about what's on the science test, or what's on the math test or etc, etc. And sometimes the math, they're pretty good at and they can go on and we can go on

and help them you know, get the math test behind them if they want, you know, so but the but the program it programmatic structure just chanGED® to say, you know, you have to have this level of proficiency before you can have access to the GED® classes, but we're going to take some of the GED® class and put it in level four. And I think it's working pretty well. I think it was a good move.

Laura: Thank you, Carol, for all those good ideas. This is Laura. I'm just writing down as people talk. So Shekera, Carol, I'm getting a lot of information from you. Just to add on that our program, we try to incorporate evidence based writing, and so that students, and also the students will become more comfortable with peer evaluations and those kinds of strategies. But I do have several students in my ESL or ELL classes that are also doing GED® classes. So they take both at the same time. And I just try to provide as, I think my background, having a little bit of experience teaching some GED® and ABE classes, has helped because I do try to include a lot of reading and comprehension and you know, activities that can strengthen that for them. But again, that's I really liked your idea about being purposeful with putting some of that GED® content in the ESL classes. I think that would be great.

Shekera: I don't want to be redundant, we're pretty much doing the same sorts of things, incorporating those incorporating some GED® curriculum into higher level ELLs, we have levels one through six. And so we start at level four up through six that we incorporate material. And I'll add that we do also add in distance learning, in addition to that, so but pretty much what Carol said.

Host: Thank you all for those responses. It's a perfect transition of how you all support language learners in ABE or HSE classes, you all gave some really good tips and suggestions about bringing some of that material into ESOL classes. And so now we're going to kind of flip that conversation and say, once they do have that proficiency to go into ABE or HSE classes, or even NEDP, if I know some of you are focusing on that as well, how are you providing those supports? So our first question is, how do instructors consider English language proficiency levels when providing learners with feedback and support in those ABE and HSE classes?

Shekera: We do rely heavily on the technology that we use in our classrooms to provide feedback. So for example, with assessments, we are looking at the results from those assessments to be able to say if you scored low in this area, this is what you need to focus on. And because that technology has really grown in leaps and bounds in recent years, it will tell a student exactly what you know, according to whatever they missed, or you know what they're scoring low in exactly what area they need, they need remediation in order to improve their score. So I think a lot of our our instructors in our programs do rely on that technology, just like we do for our placement in general when the student takes an assessment, according to how they score is how they get placed into the class the same as as for following up after they've reached a certain proficiency level. Just like with GED®, once you take the GED® Ready, it will let you know whether you've reached a certain proficiency level to go ahead and take the official exam. So I think really relying on the instructional materials that we have in the guidelines that come along with them to be able to determine if a student has reached a certain level and if they're ready for the next level.

Laura: And that's a point I think we really need to work on. I'm just learning so much from you ladies and thinking, you know, I really need to maybe be more deliberate in reaching out to the GED® teachers and working together with them. For these learners that we have. We're kind of, we work on different days, so I don't see them at all. So it's very separate. Our GED® program and our ESL program are very separate. But I think moving forward, that would be something that would be very helpful is to collaborate and work together for those learners.

Carol: Yes, and, you know, I agree, and I think this is, again, as you guys have said, this is an area that we know we need to invest in a little bit more. We've been fortunate in that a number of our ABE GED® teachers have ESL background or they've taught in the ESL classroom or they were volunteers in the ESL classroom. And so that helps. And then we have a guess the one deliberate thing that we do do is with our PLCs. And we typically our PLCs are ESL, and you know, HSE. But we offer cross pollination opportunities. So we invite, and this is probably where the English language proficiency standards have even been introduced to the HSE teachers is that they'll go to the ESL PLCs. And they go, and they want to go because they want to get tips for how to work better with their language learners in their classes. And that's where Debbie Tuler, my ESL Specialist, extraordinaire, that's where she's covering, you know, the English language proficiency standards, so they get it, they get exposed to it there. And then they start to back up and think, you know, how can I use some of these strategies, particularly to help with the reading, in what you know, the reading skill in the context of whatever the subject is that they're teaching. So that's one, that's one thing we're doing, we need to be better about it. But the other thing is, we're small enough, you know, like, Laura and Shekera, you guys have huge regions. I know. And it's just, it's, it makes it a little more complicated to execute something from, you know, a central force. But we're small enough where we can do that. And it's, you know, I'm grateful for it. Because Debbie's available, you know, Debbie can, you know, go in and observe our teachers admire it, you know, they asked for help, and they invite her, and then she can consult with them directly on things to do with that group of students. So, I feel very fortunate that we have that capability to do that, because it does really help.

Host: Thank you all for those ideas. And I really appreciate it what you all were saying about using the individualized reports from technologies such as the USA learns, or even from the GED® practice test or things like that, to be able to provide more targeted opportunities and targeted instruction for learners, I think is such a great way to kind of utilize those resources to really target what the learners need. And we started diving into a little bit our next question, but are there other opportunities that the instructors are providing for English language learner development in the HSE classes? I know, Carol, you were talking about doing some cross pollination with your learner's and professional development. And that made me realize that maybe that's something we at VALRC can start doing is maybe providing a little bit of that as well, because it seems like that's a need. But the question to you all, how do instructors include opportunities for English language development in classes with mixed enrollment, while still kind of maintaining that focus on achieving the high school equivalency?

Carol: Carol: Well, I can, one thing that's crossing my mind right now is what we're noticing that's happened with our HSE classes is that we're not getting students at adult secondary level, so much in our classes, it's like they are able to get their credential without coming to us. So there's sort of a trend, I think everybody's kind of seeing. So the people that are coming to us are more at like a middle school, you know, kind of ABE level. And that's not so far different from the ELLs in the class. So like, the whole emphasis for us on just reading instruction. And, you know, and English instruction, you know, though they know, the whole ELA spectrum, has just been sort of embedded in the way we approach it. So everything has reading, everything has speaking and listening, everything has a writing. And that's good for everybody in the class. And so, you know, I did reach out to some of my teachers, our RLA teacher in particular, and asked him, did he feel like the ABE students, or GED® students, were feeling that he was slowing it down too much? And he said, No, he said, No, I'm not saying that at all. So you know, once again, if you had some higher level folks in those classes, that would be a different story. But for those Folks, we're basically putting them on a fast track and you know with very little time in the classroom to get to their GED®. So the folks that are left in the classes, and we divide our classes into subject areas, so we have an RLA class, a social studies class, a science class, a math class. And so the people that are left inside those classes to learn, it's, it's working out fine, you know, to really slow it down and do what we would want to do with the ELLs, the native speakers are benefiting as well.

Shekera: Yeah, I'm gonna piggyback on what Carol was saying, as far as breaking the classes down to have an emphasis on the subject. I think that's been key. Because it kind of takes away the middle ground of having a combined class because you're focusing on one subject, and you'll have a range of students in various levels within that same class at that subject, if that makes sense. And another thing that I was thinking of is digital literacy, maybe putting an emphasis on digital literacy and math skills. So even in an RLA, class, you know, math is a language all of its own, on its own. So we want to include instruction that allows our students no matter what level they're at, to be able to still be challenged®, and, you know, still be able to learn, learn or gain something from that instruction.

Laura: I only did one class where I had mixed levels, and it started as a bridge class of learners. And then I, halfway through the year, they added a ABE. So I had the mix in there. And it was, um, like, Carol was saying, you know, when you put those middles there are about a middle school level, with the language learners, you know, you're dealing with about the same level of instruction there. And it was a challenge, I have to say, I just focused heavily on reading skills, speaking, listening, reading, and, you know, a lot of comprehension, and those kinds of activities. But, I was always concerned, because it seems like so many of my learners slip through the cracks with, you know, I'm not qualified to diagnose learning disabilities, but I really see that as a huge factor, and also, education level from their countries that they're coming from, the more education they have, you know, if they have a high school or college degree, they're going to learn and go through the program much quicker. So I'm very open, though, to any suggestions for how to deal with some of that, because those are just the problems that I saw or challenges with my learners.

Host: Okay, thank you guys for sharing so much. I think, you know, having whether it's, you know, ABE and ELLs, or if it's different levels in the classroom like that, that can always be challenging having those mixed groups in the same classroom. I think that focusing on the subject content area was a great suggestion. I also think that, you know, really seeing them all as being at the same point and just approaching instruction from that perspective is really helpful as well. And also, you know, differentiated learning, multiple modalities, I know that several of you mentioned, you know, making sure that you're focusing on all the different language skills in a way that's going to support their success on an HSE. So that was all really helpful and good questions too, you know, of, what do we you know, we need to improve and how do we do that and so I think that that leaves room for future exploration as well. I do want to open it up to see if you all have any further suggestions for training ABE or HSE instructors when they do have ELLs in their classroom. So, you know, Carol, you mentioned the cross pollination PLC of getting English language instructors interacting with ABE, HSE instructors. But, you know, is there anything else that's happening to provide support for those instructors or training when maybe they don't come from the English language background?

Carol: I'm just gonna give a shout out to Elizabeth because two years ago. Gosh, how long ago was that? Elizabeth? The pandemic's? It was 2019. Oh my gosh, Elizabeth came and this is my bouquet, my Elizabeth bouquet of packets that she put together for us. We did a training, if you'll remember, Elizabeth, my question was this question, you know, how do we teach, you know, solid reading instruction to both ABE and ESL, we really as a program, we really wanted to focus on reading instruction. And Elizabeth came, and we did like a combo class. So I'm just gonna say I, my teachers, you know, so we had a packet for the ELLs packets for the ELLs and we have packets for the GED® folks, but it was all on the same components of reading instruction like alphabetic, fluency. I can't I can't roll vocabulary, comprehension, there we go. So, you know, it if what, what struck me during that instruction was it was wonderful as but it's really stayed part of like our core now. And it started that kind of started this idea of this cross pollination, because like I said earlier, our ELLs start with us, maybe level one, and then they get their GED®, they stay with us for years. But they're so there is like this venn diagram where there's always overlap of the type of student in a class. So you know, we, we go back to these packets, because they're just very simple to understand solid, Elizabeth broke it down really well. So even with new teachers, I can just sort of hand them these things and go over them a little bit. When someone's asking for help. These are often the things that Debbie would go to, to say, okay, let's look at this and see, because there's specific activities and things you can think about in here. So goley, if there's could be some kind of, you know, I will, if you want to develop something, I would look back at that as a good starting place. It's worked really well for us. And we, like I said, we refer to it, and it's kind of just become part of our DNA.

And it's, you know, it's, it helps that, like you're saying, Laura, I mean, I really can't understand the difficulty. And it's kind of intimidating. I felt like this is what my GED® teachers were feeling very intimidated, like, I don't I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to work with ELLs, I have never been trained. I'm very uncomfortable. But after going through this training, I think they started to really see where the commonalities were, in terms of the kinds of instruction they can offer. And that, that just really helped them to feel more confident. I think that they were already doing some of it, you know, they just might need to slow down and add a few things

here. But but they were on the right track anyway. So thank you again, Elizabeth. It's still as it's still hanging, it's still lingering, your presence lingers here.

Host: That's so nice to hear. Thank you, Carol.

Carol: Well, I would definitely point any instructor, Program Manager coordinator to VALRC, I think you all do an absolutely fantastic job at offering a wide variety of PLCs PD opportunities. And so that's literally what I've done for our region, I've created a regional Member site is what I call it. So every staff member in our region has access to a dashboard of information. And so if whether you're a program manager, instructor, data specialist or finance specialist, you can find information about the latest offerings for PD opportunities, and the vast majority of them come from VALRC. So you guys are doing an amazing job and I appreciate it because we really do take advantage of it and you're really hitting on the subjects that we need. As a matter of fact, I'm just in contact with Hali to schedule a regional PD for us here soon. So that's the first thing I would say, have you checked the VALRC site to see what PLCs are currently being offered. They literally come you know, on a monthly, sometimes weekly basis that you can get in on something and get trained, trained up.

Shekera: I just want to say thank you for all of the great ideas. And now I'm going to request that we get Elizabeth for that training in our region. Sounded good. But thank you all. Appreciate it.

Host: Yeah, I do think like Elizabeth mentioned earlier, really integrating HSE and English language instructors is something we could do more at VALRC. I do think it's something we have been trying to do. And we do here, it's, you know, we get different requests from different PD, right? Like, I just I want to talk to people that are in the same role as me, but then we get requests for having that cross pollination. And I think just really creating that culture of finding those commonalities, like, like Carol mentioned, because they do exist, I often joke that English language instruction is just good instruction. Everyone should be using our techniques and strategies. But yeah, I think there's a lot of room to learn from each other. And we definitely appreciate your acknowledgement of the PD opportunities at VALRC. And for anyone listening, if you do have any training needs, definitely let us know. Because we can, you know, customize offerings we currently have, or, or figure out, you know, something like Elizabeth did that training for Carol, I think you really designed that based on the needs that Carol presented. So that's always an option. I think we can kind of move into that last section. Elizabeth, do you want to open that up?

Host: Yeah, and I think, again, we don't need to be redundant, this is kind of our closeout section, but really just kind of thinking about any additional supports for English language learners who are pursuing their HSE. So whether that's through the English language classes, or if it's through NEDP, or the actual HSE classes, so if you all have any additional supports that you provide, for how those supports are communicated, we'll kind of leave it at that and open that up for any additional or concluding thoughts.

Shekera: I would this is Shekera, I would suggest that we ensure our programs are utilizing their access to our local Workforce Board partnerships as well. And ensuring that as long that comes

with our you know, our grant the opportunity for partnering with other providers who are able to provide the wraparound services or supports that we can't necessarily provide. So I would, that's what I would encourage and just make sure we're maintaining a personalized approach for our students, it's easy to kind of say, Okay, well group, this group in here, and you know, and address it that way. But when we bring it back down to a personalized approach, not only is it I feel more successful for our students, because that is providing them that one on one time, and we're really pouring into, you know, their goals and their aspirations. And they, they recognize that, but also, because once we find something that works with the student, we're able to then copy that and use that same strategy with with additional students and additional programs and may not necessarily fit a particular mold, but it enables us to create a sustainable and successful opportunity for our students. So I definitely think just making sure we're keeping things personalized, and that's why we're investing in career coaching. Because that's, that's, that's what our students are showing that they need and that they're interested in. And so far, so good.

Carol: The, I was just gonna mention a couple of other programmatic things that we do just to support our language learners in general, as we do have learning circles. So sometimes we have I think someone mentioned earlier that Shekera, I can't remember Shekera, Laura, or both that students will take both ESL and GED® classes at the same time. It and we do have that to a small degree, it just not many people can, can do you know, 12 to 15 hours of instruction. Now, many of our students can do that. So we have these learning circles that just meet once a week, and for three hours and they're more informal, and students can do the GED® classes and do the learning circles and that really focuses on the language more. And then we also have a thing called dialogue Cafe, which is much more of the oral skill development where we have volunteers come in from our community and work with ours, just have conversation with their students. We do that once a week. And it's, you know, both of those things to sort of continue to support language development on top of, you know, learning about photosynthesis, or whatever, whatever the the content topic is. And one other thing I have, I've looked down my notes, one of the other one other thing we're really fortunate is we have a great partnership with our local literacy volunteers. So particularly with our IET programs, they help us with, like our CNA program, we just started this week, we have of course our language learner embedded in with the nurse trainer. But then literacy volunteers offers an additional tutor, most often someone from the healthcare profession to work one on one with students that are desiring that or needing that. So that's another support that we're really fortunate to have.

Laura: We have many of the same that Shekera and Carol have mentioned, the only thing I would add is we have Well, I think you mentioned this as well working one on one, but yet we have tutors specifically to help with subjects, certain subjects. And any student that has trouble can be connected with those tutors. But I really like some of your ideas, Carol, so I'm busy writing those down. But I don't have anything else to add, you've you've both covered so much.

Carol: And I think it's so typical of adult ed and and you know, it's like we're scrappy, from the perspective of, you know, we're very focused on who walks in the door, who signs up for zoom or whatever, who connects with us. And we just, you know, within the, you know, few resources that we have the very limited resources that we have, we just kind of look around and say,

Okay, do I have any way of helping this person with, you know, this identified need, and I'm always impressed. And it's been great hearing from you, Laura and from you Shekera today, as well just, you know, what all is happening? You know, in other areas, too, because we all were always like, literally, you know, scratching their heads, just wondering, like, what do we do here? And, you know, there's rarely enough money just to add another class, or, you know, are no people to justify because it's a lot. It's a lot of independent focus, I think, like both Laura and Shekera have had. But yeah, it's, it's, I applaud you, Hali, and Elizabeth for, you know, starting this conversation, because we need, we definitely need it, I mean, you hit on me. And I think you could tell from all three of us that we're trying to do what we can, and we're piecing it together, but it's always better to be proactive and thoughtful, you know, to the degree that we can, and of course, I'll just spend my kudos to VALRC and the things that you guys are doing, I think you're really listening and hearing what's needed. And you're coming up with really flexible learning options, which is, you know, part of what we need with these PLCs rather than the commitment to a full course or whatever. And it's really helping, so thank you, for you know, going in this direction, I you know, we will look forward to learning from you and from others in the state so we can get better at it.

Host: That's another great transition Carol, I feel like this whole episode you've been like really anticipating where we're going. So I appreciate that. But yeah, I think that you know, programs are really going to be able other programs are really going to be able to learn from the suggestions and strategies that you all have offered today. And we will provide your contact information on this episode. So if people want to talk more about the suggestions or strategies you've offered or share their own or just kind of build more networking opportunities that will know, that will be there. And also we're going to continue this so this is not going to be our only episode this year. So this is something we have more ongoing and we are hoping that these shorter snippets of you know, it is a way to connect with other programs without having to get on a zoom call or you know, do different things like that you can listen on your way to or from work or you know, however it best works for you. So we're excited about continuing this. I think this is a great first step. And you know, Carol mentioned learning circles which is something else we are working on kind of disseminating more to the, to the state. So if you are interested in learning more about learning circles, please reach out to VALRC, can we can provide more information on that. And, Elizabeth, do you have anything to add before we wrap up?

Host: No, I was just gonna highlight the many times that partnerships and you know, working with workforce boards and literacy volunteers and other volunteers and how important that is, for us as a field. We're so resourceful and scrappy, like Carol mentioned. But the building those partnerships and continue to become integrated with the community is super important to providing supports and full services for our learners and really taking into account their individual needs. So I really appreciated that all three of you in this final section really highlighted and emphasized those points because I think it's a great way, a great note to end on.