



# Nebraska AE News

*A Newsletter for Adult Education Staff in Nebraska*

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<http://www.education.ne.gov/ADED/index.html>



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September 2016

## **A New Year Begins in Nebraska Adult Education**

**By: Vicki Bauer, Nebraska Adult Education Director**

While some Adult Education (AE) programs hold classes all year long, September is traditionally the time all AE programs are in full swing and another successful year begins. And, with this year, Nebraska Adult Education is incorporating more components of our WIOA legislation (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014). As the nation moves to full execution of WIOA, one of the expanded purposes of WIOA which is mentioned specifically in Title II, includes assisting our adult students to obtain **economic self-sufficiency**. As mentioned in the Career Pathways (CP) trainings this summer, one of Nebraska's AE goals is to assist our students in being educated and trained for middle-skill jobs and not remaining in the low-skill jobs that many currently have upon entry into our program due to their academic skills.

One of the new components of WIOA and Adult Education is for AE to provide a Career Pathways program for our students, which in our program, includes employment skills, career readiness, and college readiness. NDE sponsored eight CP workshops in June and August for AE staff to attend. Over 300 persons attended the Career Pathways workshops held throughout the state. Individual program grantees have been given the flexibility to implement the required components that will assist our adult students both in class and as they leave class for the next step in their lives – which for most is either employment or post-secondary education. And it is worth mentioning again – Career Pathways for both ESL students and Corrections are the focus of the Nebraska Career Pathways committee this year. Please note that the video of the summer CP training will be available and can soon be accessed on the NDE/Adult Education webpage <https://www.education.ne.gov/ADED/Index.html>. Those AE staff who were unable to attend this summer and new AE staff will need to view the video.

We have heard of some great and innovative ideas being incorporated into Nebraska's AE classrooms this year. And while we do have some students who are not entering the workforce or further education/training immediately or at all, the skills they learn in Adult Education are important parts of lifelong learning.

## **Speaking of learning.....**

I was listening to NPR on my way home from work yesterday; there was a story about a relatively unknown English rule about the order that adjectives are placed before a noun. Funny, I do not remember this “adjective rule” from high school (sorry, Mrs. Brackhan) English classes, but when you think about it, it makes sense. The rule is referenced in Mark Forsyth's book, “The Elements of Eloquence: How to Turn the Perfect English Phrase,” and has been discussed a lot this past week on TV, radio, and social and written media. This particular rule states that adjectives are placed in a certain order before a noun when writing or speaking; if you don't place them in the correct order, the sentence will sound odd. The question is: Do you automatically think of the rule when forming a sentence? Here's the correct order for placing adjectives before a noun when speaking or writing: opinion, size, age, shape, color, origin, material, purpose, and then the noun.

For example, it wouldn't sound quite right if someone said, “I saw an old, New England-style, red, large barn.” But, we would say, “a large, old, red, New England-style barn.” But, we (at least I) don't consciously think about the order; it just comes naturally. Think about it. As *Washington Post* writer Simon Horobin asked in his September 7 article, “Big, Bad Wolf, or Bad, Big Wolf?” Of course there are exceptions.....To read more, just Google: order of adjectives preceding a noun.

### **Exciting GED® Information...**

A note about GED® completions in 2016, compared to 2015 and 2014. Nebraska is continuing to increase the number of GED® graduates each year and I am happy to say that we are/were above the national pass rate in all three years. Here's some interesting information: Today, we have exactly 500 graduates since January 1, 2016. Congratulations to all of you who helped make this achievement a reality! This is a 45% increase over this date a year ago, and a 73% increase over this time in 2014! We continue to grow in our number of graduates and we can say that 16% are considered **college ready**; meaning they are at an educational level at which they do not need to take any developmental classes when entering college, and/or do not need to take a college entrance exam (this is at the discretion of the post-secondary institution).

This percentage continues to increase, as we definitely want. As we know, it is often difficult to convince students to stay with us longer than meeting the "minimum academic requirements" to take the GED® tests or to learn more than just the necessary English language to "get by." Remaining in AE to become college ready can help students financially since Pell Grants can be used for developmental education classes. For a long time, Adult Education has been concerned that students who use Pell Grant monies to pay for developmental education classes often deplete their Pell Grant funds before they complete their college careers and then have to drop out of college before they have earned a degree/certification. This is only one of the reasons why we want our college-bound students to take advantage of AE's program until they reach that 12.9 grade level.

The "GED® Gurus" (or experts), Bonnie Goonen and Susan Pittman, will present at the AE conference this year – from a pre-conference session on Wednesday afternoon, to the last focus session on Friday afternoon, to share their extraordinary wealth of information, instructional strategies, and experience with adult learners.

### **WIOA News....**

A bit of an update concerning WIOA: final guidance from the federal agencies (Department of Labor and Department of Education) was released on June 30 of this year. There are literally hundreds of pages to read, explaining the WIOA law and what it means to all the partners. For approximately 1.5 years, the Nebraska state level partners have gathered to create a combined state plan and formulate goals, guidelines, expectations, and the list goes on, for the WIOA partners. Now that we have more definite guidance, more information can be shared and additional decisions can now be made. Stay tuned for more as we move along to full implementation next year. I attended the State Directors of Adult Education annual meeting in Alexandria, Virginia the last week of August and I am still deciphering my notes and reading additional information to share with local program directors who, in turn, will share with local program staff. Believe me, there is a lot of information to share. Additional professional development will be required as we move forward. Additional federal guidance is forthcoming on the "how to's" of implementation as well as directions concerning the American Job Center (AJC) shared costs among WIOA partners.

All states had some changes to make with their respective state plans since the plans were originally due prior to the rules and regulations being published. Nebraska's plan partners were no exception; the plan revisions were submitted on September 1, 2016.

### **Nebraska Adult Education Conference...**

I encourage you to attend our AE conference this year on October 20 & 21 in Kearney. We have added two Wednesday afternoon pre-sessions! We will be celebrating our 35<sup>th</sup> annual conference and have some outstanding national, state and local Adult Education professionals sharing their knowledge and expertise with us. When comparing AE Conference schedules from the early 80's (which show only a couple concurrent sessions on Saturday morning & afternoon and a keynote speaker at lunchtime) with the AE Conference programs over the past few years, one can easily see how very far we have come and how much we have achieved! The learning and development of AE staff as well as our students, continues to grow each year.

### **And finally,**

I wish you the best as you embark on a new and exciting year in Nebraska Adult Education. We all continue to learn and grow as we help our students do the same. And of course, thanks for all you do to help the students in the Nebraska Adult Education programs prepare for their future!



## **Finding Employment Success As An SCC-Lincoln GED® Graduate**

**By: Christian Stebbins**

I had dropped out of high school my super senior year and found myself having an abundant amount of obstacles in my way to get a job outside of fast food. I spent two years out of school working fast food jobs and had recently basically been “couch hopping.” I went around trying to get a stable job (that I cared for) to make a living. I decided to get my GED® diploma and go back to school.

Since I've achieved passing all of the GED® tests, I've had a large amount of interviews that had nothing to do with food. Some of them still involved food, but at higher levels. I wouldn't have to handle the making or production of fast food or any food. I also registered for summer classes and am currently attending classes at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. What I've learned since being back to school has almost completely changed my outlook on life and it has helped to inspire me to be me and to do what I love as well as making new friends. The “doors” are beginning to open for me.

Life is long and can be tough. It definitely has a funny way of showing how sometimes, most often obstacles put in the way aren't easy to get past at all, which is why getting your GED® or diploma is important. It opens up about 80% of the jobs you couldn't work at before just with that certification. In the process of that for me, I began to meet new people and make connections, find out who I am and a sense of what I want to do with my life.

About 80% of the jobs available in our community require a GED® or a high school diploma. It shows employers that you are willing to do the work it takes to get you to where you want and ought to be going. You could also meet some pretty inspiring people that could help through some rough patches or congratulate you with some “feel goods” and excitement when you achieve goals for yourself. This also makes you want better; nicer things not just for yourself but the people who you let yourself be surrounded by.



## **Adult Education Conference – October 20-21, 2016 Pre-Sessions Added!**

**By: Jim Lukesh, Nebraska Adult Education Consultant**

The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Nebraska Adult Education Conference will feature two afternoon pre-sessions on October 19 prior to the conference on October 20. Make sure to arrive early as two outstanding sessions will be presented.

Bonnie Goonen and Susan Pittman of GED® will present a pre-session entitled, “Is That What You Mean? Interpreting Inferences from Textual Evidence.” Join your fellow AE and GED® instructors in having some fun “reading between the lines.” Goonen and Pittman are presenters in the popular “Tuesdays for Teachers” webinars that have been very successful the past year. The pair also did a series of NDE

webinars shortly after the new GED® tests came out and presented a two-day workshop at Kearney in 2013 in preparation for the 2014 GED® test series.

At the same time Greg Stultz of New Readers Press will present a workshop entitled, “Materials & Strategies for the Multilevel ESL Classroom.” In this 2½ hour workshop, the attendees will be introduced to four exciting series by author and teacher Ann Gianola. Participants will discover how parallel themes across levels and exercise types make these materials conducive to multilevel class instruction. After a presentation of the materials, participants will form teams and collaborate on ways to provide effective, engaging, level-appropriate instruction to ESL students in a multilevel classroom environment. A workshop wrap-up will allow teams to share and compare their findings. Each participant will receive a student book along with a hardcopy of the PowerPoint.

Come early to the Conference and partake in these excellent professional development activities and enjoy another evening of collegiality and cuisine in Kearney.

## **Back To The Beginning...Full Speed Ahead Propelling Beginning Readers Forward (COABE 2016)**

**By: Carol Leonhardt, Southeast Community College**

As one of the COABE Conference winners at the Nebraska Adult Education Conference last fall, I was privileged to attend the 2016 Conference in Dallas, Texas. I really enjoy attending conferences like this because of the opportunities to examine new ideas and materials and to talk with educators and publishing representatives. Since I oversee the AE-funded ESL program at Southeast Community College, I am always looking for anything that can advantage our students. I am especially interested in finding anything that will help adult ESL students to read fluently. The COABE Conference theme this year was career and academic readiness, but in order to take advantage of academic programs and career resources, students must be able to read.

In our ESL program at Southeast Community College, we have several tiers of classes. The first tier is the Basic ESL courses where students' oral proficiency is assessed with BEST Plus. After a student exits BEST Plus, they are administered the TABE E reading test to determine whether they have the necessary reading skills to register for one of the tuition-based ESL courses where they will need to be able to take written tests and do homework independently. Those who score less than GE 4.0 (grade equivalent) are directed to two levels of ESL beginning reading classes. Although reading instruction is incorporated into the Basic ESL courses at every level, many students who exit BEST Plus still score GE 2.0 or less on their first TABE E reading test. These students often struggle to raise their score and, if only measured by their TABE score, can appear to make little progress. I was thinking about these students when I looked through the directory of multiple sessions all promising wonderful results for students. I was particularly looking for anything that would help our struggling readers. I will share some of what I gleaned at a session titled, "Back to the Beginning...Full Speed Ahead—Propelling Beginning Readers Forward." The presenter was Kelley Provence from Literacy Action in Atlanta, Georgia. She emphasized that reading involves a cluster of skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension. A quick text version of Provence's handouts is below.

**Phonemic awareness** refers to the sounds in words. Students need a systematic approach that focuses on one or two tasks at a time: Recognizing a common sound in different words, blending a sequence of sounds in a word, and segmenting a word into individual sounds.

**Phonics** refers to the connection between letters and sounds. Systematic instruction in phonics is important for beginning readers. Students need to read after every phonics lesson in controlled texts that can be decoded with the students' current phonetic skills. Phonics skills must be practiced to become automatic, so students must read, read, read at their current reading level.

**Fluency** is the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with appropriate expression. Readers need guided repeated oral reading which could be: reading to the teacher, echoing the teacher, reading with a partner and taking turns, choral reading in unison, or reading along with a CD. Provence suggested allowing students to read text silently before reading it aloud.

**Vocabulary** instruction should provide multiple exposures and keep students engaged in speaking, reading and writing as they learn. Help students write by using sentence frames and teach them to look for prefixes and suffixes, context clues, and how to use a dictionary. Provence suggests keeping a personal vocabulary notebook. She recommended [Dictionary.com](http://Dictionary.com) which pronounces the word and provides definition, part of speech, and examples of how to use the word in a sentence. Provence believes students will learn more vocabulary by reading level-appropriate materials on a variety of topics than by reading word lists.

**Comprehension** is understanding what you read. Background knowledge and vocabulary are necessary for comprehension. Provence says that students need to be taught to think about reading with pre-reading strategies, comprehension checks, graphic organizers, story structure, answering and generating questions, and summarizing. Readers need to look at the pictures, headings, and summaries and ask themselves, "What do I already know about this?"

Provence based her presentation on information developed by the National Center for Family Literacy in 2005, "Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers" by Susan McShane.

Provence shared these helpful websites to aid reading instruction. All listed websites are *free*.

[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) Gives definition, part of speech, synonyms, example sentences and idiom usage; audible pronunciation of the word.

<http://shawenglish.com> Basic phonics videos and English lessons designed for adult learners

[www.readingbear.org](http://www.readingbear.org) Systematically teaches phonics and vocabulary. Website's name sounds juvenile, but content is appropriate for adult learners. Each word spoken at 4 speeds, illustrated with a picture, and used in a sentence illustrated with a short video. Students need to register on this free site with an email address.

[http://resources.marshalladulthoodeducation.org/reading\\_skills\\_home.htm](http://resources.marshalladulthoodeducation.org/reading_skills_home.htm) Short leveled stories for beginning adult readers with read-along audio. Stories and comprehension questions can be printed.

[www.clarkness.com](http://www.clarkness.com) Stories and eBooks for the beginning reader; some rebus style

[www.readworks.com](http://www.readworks.com) Teacher website with many leveled K-12 reading passages representing various genres and topics. Sort by reading level, topic, vocabulary, or reading strategy.

[www.readtheory.org](http://www.readtheory.org) Teachers can login to create a class. Leveled online reading passages and quizzes, but no audio. This website is a favorite with several SCC reading instructors.

[www.tarheelreader.org](http://www.tarheelreader.org) A collection of very easy-to-read picture books which can be speech enabled (Click on the gear). Collection includes a set of alphabet books, one for each letter of the alphabet.

[www.Read-able.com](http://www.Read-able.com) or <https://readability-score.com> Calculate the readability of a reading passage.

## **Building Local WIOA Partnerships**

*Submitted by: Diane Bruha and Ryan Hinz, Crete Public Schools – Special Programs*

We have all been hearing a lot about WIOA lately... employers, career pathways, and core partners...Oh my! Working with our core partners is a foundational aspect of the new legislation. As we look to incorporate WIOA partnerships into our adult education programs, we have two choices. We can either wait and hope our core partners and employers come to us, or we can take the initiative and reach out to them. In Crete, we have chosen to do the latter.

This has led to an amazing new partnership with our local American Job Center (AJC) in Beatrice. Part of this partnership is reaching out to employers in and around our community to engage them in the career pathways process. This outreach is called Partnerships for Employment Success or PES. Along with our Department of Labor (DOL) representatives, we recently hosted our first PES meeting in early August. Five area employers attended along with a representative from Proteus, a service organization that works with the DOL's migrant farmworker program.

We shared information regarding our programs and ways we can partner with employers to improve their existing workforce and help job seekers fill open positions. We can offer training programs, some of which can be paid for by grants through DOL, while also creating pathways for our students to become employees. In addition, we opened the meeting to discussion about specific skills employers are looking for in recruits and employees so we can incorporate them into our programs. This feedback is essential if we are to create a truly effective career pathway program and is, in fact, a required component of WIOA.

Employers and other participants were very receptive and appreciated that we were making the effort to reach out to them. Our AJC representative really summed up the success of the meeting like this, "Why haven't we been doing this all along!?" The truth is, we should have been doing this all along, but we were all content to sit in our silos. However, if we are going to help students become successful, we must update our practices and get into our communities.



## **GED® Success A Possibility!**

**By: Diego Joaquin-Miguel, Southeast Community College**

I enrolled in the GED® program because I wanted to obtain a better job. It will open a lot of doors for me. I will have the opportunity to apply for a position that I deserve. No matter the circumstances, success is possible if you put your effort into it. Don't give up when you feel like doing it. The success is a possibility with support from our community. The GED® program will continue to provide free programs to students.

## **Southeast Community College And Drug Court Partner To Benefit Students**

**By: Lynne Saffer, Southeast Community College - Lincoln**

"We are so glad to have our mom back again." "We are thankful our son is ours again." "I am so proud of my son who worked hard to get through this." "I am glad my son has his father back in his life." These are just a few comments stated by family members of Drug Court graduates in a video presented at the Lancaster County Drug Court graduation in July. Southeast Community College/Lincoln Adult Education is proud to partner with Drug Court, a voluntary program created by the District Court in June 2001, that allows eligible defendants to earn a dismissal of pending felony charges or probation revocation upon successful completion. SCC and Drug Court began partnering in spring of 2015, and since then, 5 students attained their GED® diplomas. Others gained skills in reading, writing, and math, to help them attain or retain employment.

Participants are required to submit to frequent and random drug testing (no less than twice per week), complete Substance Use Treatment including attending individual and group sessions, meet regularly with a Supervision Officer, attend Drug Court hearings regularly in front of a Drug Court Judge, complete cognitive educational groups (Thinking for Good and Moral Reconciliation Therapy) and other groups (relationship class, parenting class, Helping Women/Men Recover). In addition, they are required to obtain and maintain employment, obtain or make progress toward receiving their GED® diploma or meet other educational goals, abide by a curfew, submit to searches, and are required to pay restitution, fines, and Drug Court fees. The mission of the Lancaster County Adult Drug Court is to increase public safety by providing a program that facilitates access to treatment, implements intensive case management, decreases substance abuse, and returns law-abiding, productive, and responsible citizens to their families and the community.

According to Sadie Jensen, Drug Court Supervision Officer, it takes participants an average of about 21 - 23 months to complete the program, which costs \$125.00 per month. Sadie says the partnership with SCC Adult Education is important to their program. "The Southeast Community College Adult Education Department has been the driving force and a wonderful collaborative partner in helping Drug Court participants meet their educational goals. Lynn and Diane have been instrumental in developing and organizing the GED® class for Drug Court participants. Karen, our instructor, is a positive support for the participants in the classroom and motivates them to push through difficulties and keep learning. We are also so appreciative of the other GED® instructors that have helped the participants along the way, in other classrooms or as substitute instructors. The volunteers have an amazing wealth of knowledge, and the participants look to them often for their thoughtful assistance.

With the help of Southeast Community College, the Adult Education Department, the instructors, and volunteers, the GED® classes provided for Drug Court participants have been an immense success. The participants speak so highly of the encouragement they receive and the accomplishment they feel when they reach educational goals they never thought possible. The Drug Court Team is grateful for all the hard work and dedication to the Drug Court participants!"



## **Adult and Family Literacy Week**

**September 26-October 1, 2016**

To raise visibility, the National Coalition for Literacy has developed tools to assist programs and individuals participating in promotion of adult education and family literacy. Visit <http://national-coalition-literacy.org>. You'll find a two-page factsheet with information linking low literacy to income inequality and parenting, the AEFL Week logo for the adult education and family literacy community to add to websites, social media posts, materials, and more. In addition, please be sure to share your AEFL Week plans with us!

## **BEST Plus 2.0 Upgrade Arrives**

*By: Jim Lukesh, Nebraska Adult Education Consultant*

After months, actually years, of waiting, the upgrade of the BEST Plus test used in Nebraska, BEST Plus 2.0, has arrived and is being put to use. The BEST Plus, developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), is an individually administered; scripted oral interview designed to assess English language learners' interpersonal communication using everyday language. BEST Plus is a performance-based test that measures an ESOL learner's oral skills in three areas: Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication.

The BEST Plus test has been used in Nebraska since 2009 and BEST Plus 2.0 is basically an upgrade of the process. CAL promised a seamless transition from BEST Plus to BEST Plus 2.0 and all of us who are used to spending hours on the phone with someone from a far-away country while trying to upgrade a computer or smart phone withheld judgment until seeing the product.

CAL was good as their word and the transition was basically seamless with trainers and test administrators moving from the original to 2.0 with very little difficulty. The most noticeable changes were in updating pictures, questions, and contexts in which questions are placed. This is to make the test more "real" for new students who may struggle with idioms but struggle more with those that are outdated. Otherwise there is very little outward change even though the scoring tables have been adjusted somewhat.

The Nebraska BEST Plus Trainers: Kathy Crosin-Harlow, Sharon McClaren, and Carol Leonhardt were the first to work with 2.0 in Nebraska and presented trainings for 32 new test administrators and "recalibration" trainings for 54 previous test administrators. One more new administrator training will be held later in the year and one more "recalibration" will be held but is not yet on the calendar.

BEST Plus, and now BEST Plus 2.0, has proven to be very accurate in assessing a potential learner's oral skills but in order to be this accurate it is necessary that the test administrators work often and attend trainings to maintain their individual skills. It is highly important to our programs that new learners be tested and placed at the proper level. Otherwise, this can leave a learner at too high a placement and without much chance and too low a placement can leave a learner being bored by having to go over things he or she already knows. This affects the student movement through Educational Functioning Levels (EFL's, now also called Minimum Student Gains or MSG's) which can affect our standing and budget with the US Department of Education if we do not meet the goals set for our programs.

That is a long-winded way of saying our students could miss out and we could suffer an acute pain in the budget if our students do not make gains and the beginning of that process is proper placement through BEST Plus 2.0.

## **Adult Education Program Directors Meet**

*By: Jim Lukesh, Nebraska Adult Education Consultant*

Directors and representatives of all of the Nebraska Adult Education programs held their semi-annual meeting on August 16-17, 2016 at the Holiday Inn Express in Kearney. A full agenda led to a full two days of reports and discussions about the factors affecting Adult Education in Nebraska. As could be expected, WIOA and the obligations of the programs under the new legislation were key points along with GED and State Leadership. A further report and discussion was held on program year end reports and how we can improve the EFL gains to improve our state standing in meeting goals established by the US Department of Education. Special emphasis was placed on marketing the individual programs to their constituencies to increase both student and volunteer numbers.

During the meeting Cherisa Price-Wells, Brenda Weiland, and George Agena reported to the group on ResCare, an organization dedicated to giving assistance to ex-offenders and helping them to overcome barriers to employment and to engage in meaningful careers. The group presents specialized employment classes and urges ex-offenders to "Get the right future – starting today!" Tate Lauer of SCC-Beatrice reported to the directors on the Career Planning workshops that have been offered across the state and Kathy Boshart and spoke about new facets of the AIMS reporting system and introduced Kor Tot who will be taking over the AIMS duties for the Nebraska Department of Education. Housekeeping including forms templates and digital copies of form templates completed a full two days of meetings and welcome fellowship with colleagues.