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WELCOME



The word “leadership” can conjure up different images in our minds: We may think of public figures, work supervisors, teachers, parents, and students. And the list goes on. What it means to lead, and leadership theory, can be illustrated in so many ways, and some of them can be quite unexpected. I recently attended a national conference on behalf of COABE and after a day of exhibiting and presenting, I chose to grab a quick dinner at the hotel bistro overlooking the outdoor pool. It was early evening, and neither the restaurant nor the pool was particularly busy. I placed my order, and as I waited for my meal, I noticed an interesting scene unfolding on the pool deck. A determined seagull had found what it believed to be an evening meal hidden in an abandoned pizza box. This determined fowl went on to peck and fling this box across the concrete and into chairs trying to unlock the prize inside. Meanwhile, another feathered character entered the picture, a black crow, who was also looking for a tasty morsel or two. As our seagull friend continued to fling and peck at the cover of the box,

the crow began to move in on the scene. With great resolve, the seagull squawked and flapped its wings at this intruder, and even charged this foe, all while keeping the prized box within reach. The crow was eventually dissuaded from moving any closer and left the scene when a larger seagull entered the area. Unlike with the crow, the determined seagull welcomed the new, and much larger, character on the scene and showed a willingness to share the spoils with this new friend should they get the box to release its treasure, which they eventually did! So, what is the leadership lesson of this story you might ask? I offer three:

1. **Leaders are focused on the mission.** A competent leader understands the mission of their organization, be it a Fortune 100 company, a nonprofit or publicly funded adult education program, or a classroom. A leader stays focused on the “what, why, and how” of their organization’s mission and works productively toward fulfilling the mission. Like our feathered friend whose immediate mission was to unlock the cardboard treasure box.
2. **Leaders are persistent and know how to confront challenges** and distractors in order to stave them off and retain their focus. The seagull faced the dual challenges of filling its belly and removing the distraction while retaining the mission focus.
3. **Leaders surround themselves with like-minded allies** to reach organizational goals, and they share the spoils of their success. “Teamwork makes the dream work” is a sentiment that speaks to the power of “us” in advancing a cause or a vision, and secure leaders who actively welcome and seek skilled teammates and allies to help achieve the organization’s short- and long-term goals.

This leadership-focused edition of The COABE Journal highlights best practices for those who lead at the classroom and organizational levels. These articles are written by practitioners for practitioners and have been compiled to help inspire those working with adults as they move toward their educational and workplace goals. Many of the principles and examples shared within these pages are derived from firsthand experiences, and it is my hope that as you read and reflect on this content, you will be challenged and refreshed as you lead toward the goal, just like our seagull friend.

Lead on!

Don Finn, Ph.D.

COABE President (2019-2020)

Publications Committee Chairman



WELCOME

Thanks for picking up this edition of the COABE Journal!

In this issue, we are exploring leadership. We are grateful that so many of you reflected on how leadership manifests itself in your work—in research, in partnership, in professional development, and in your classrooms. As you read these remarkable pieces, you won't be surprised to learn that adult education leadership is collaborative, distributed, and egoless.

Education values the "beginner's mindset"—the Zen concept that includes having an openness and a freedom when studying a subject. For me, this means trying to come to adult education discussions—even after decades in the field—as a beginner would, without pre-conceptions.

It is hard work to let go of your "expertise" and hard to see things you know well from a fresh perspective, but I hope you will do just that when reading this issue. Certainly you know leaders—good and bad—and you know effective and ineffective leadership styles, but step back a bit and let yourself be taught anew through these voices and their actions in leading our field forward.



Sincerely,

Judy Mortrude
Managing Editor
The Resource for Adult Education



RESEARCH

LEADERSHIP: FILIPINA DOMESTIC WORKERS VOLUNTEER TO TEACH CARE-GIVING

Daphna Arbell Kehila, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Based on a qualitative case study, this paper presents the initiative, motivation, and challenges faced by Filipina foreign domestic workers (FDWs) who volunteer to teach their peers care-giving. This case is embedded in the context of a nonformal education program provided by the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) located in Singapore. Data were collected during 2017, including individual interviews and focus groups, and analyzed using a three-step ethnographic process of direct observations to emphasise local knowledge and context and direct personal engagement of the researcher with the community of FDWs. This paper links the FDW's complex personal, societal, and cultural factors to the leadership style of the Filipina volunteer trainers, suggesting that the heritage of colonialism influences the values and identity of the Filipina FDWs while they try to lead for social mobility and identity transformation through continuing education.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in demographics (aging and low fertility), combined with growing cultural acceptance of outsourcing care of family members to non-family caregivers, have created structural, cultural, and policy transformations relating to the role of women in Asian countries. Peng (2016) describes the increased economic imperatives and incentives for women to find employment abroad, which effect the migration of domestic workers and home-based carers in East and Southeast Asia. In addition, a long-term health-care provision creates a growing demand for home-care-giving. This trend is expected to increase and to require ongoing training and support for caregivers.

Live-in foreign domestic workers (FDWs) in Singapore are an essential part of the economy but are socially marginalized as outsiders. In a reality of rapid demographic aging and low fertility, Singaporean families usually engage a FDW as a home-caregiver. The importance of education and training for live-in care-workers in Singapore has influenced the development of a nonformal education market (Kehila, 2018). In my dissertation study, I argued that by encouraging a systematic involvement of FDWs in the development of education and training programs, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other training providers may recognize the importance of caregivers' lay knowledge as an important step in creating a new channel for social mobility of migrant domestic workers.

Education opportunities provide FDWs a channel for continuing professional development, a way to climb the professional ladder and become recognized caregivers. Such development implies not only shifts in role and work conditions, but also in identity. This paper examines aspects of adult learning and development issues alongside the nature and role of leadership. What are the challenges of a migrant domestic worker who begins learning as an informal experience in the employer's household, transitions into a nonformal training program, and follows with a call for professional recognition? How do the domestic workers who volunteer to be program developers and implementers deal with the teamwork and collaboration required in these roles? In what ways may the organization influence the volunteering members to be effective leaders in their community? These questions will be further discussed in this paper as aspects of leadership developed from the bottom up, rather than the top down, aiming to support the needs of migrant domestic workers in their role as caregivers.

The next section presents a literature review on the reality of migrant domestic workers globally and in Singapore. A section about HOME, an organization that provides services for the community of migrant workers in Singapore, suggests the context of this case and my research study. The discussion section will draw connections to aspects of leadership and suggest areas for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A 2013 report by the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs reported, in *World Migration in Figures*, that a large number of countries have had an increased number of migrants. The demographics of migrants disrupt the social fabric of both sending and hosting countries in different ways; large immigrations of women accepted for care-work is one such disruption that affects multiple care structures. Therefore, the process of feminization seen in the increased migration of domestic workers—and influenced by the global care chains (Hochschild, 2000; Isaksen, Devi, & Hochschild, 2008; Lan, 2008; Piper, 2008; Skornia, 2014; Yeates, 2009; 2011; 2012)—suggests the importance of transnational care structures in changing social, political and economic systems. The literature presents the research complexities through mapping the causes, dynamics, and consequences of the globalization of paid and unpaid reproductive labor, and its focus on care.

Transnational migration is one phenomenon that is not only a response to global changes but itself generates global and local changes. The migration process may involve risks and create stress, vulnerabilities, and long-term instability (Brigham, Baillie Abidi, Tastsoglou, & Lange, 2015; Constable, 2014; Devasahayam & Yeoh, 2007; Lam, Yeoh, & Huang, 2006). Kuo's 2014 review highlights aspects of coping, acculturation, and psychological adaptation among migrants.

Despite the relevance of domestic work and home care-giving, and its importance both nationally and internationally, there is almost no research literature on the experiences and education of women migrant domestic workers. A fundamental milestone was achieved at the 189th Domestic Workers Convention organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2011, specifically aimed at promoting decent work and rights at work. The ILO report (2015) highlighted the distribution and economic contribution of more than eleven million migrant domestic workers globally. However, the domestic labor trade is not simply an economic transaction, governed by the market, but a socio-cultural relationship between individuals, negotiated at many levels, including the daily world of the household (Suleman, 2015). Multileveled social justice issues permeate migration dynamics and challenge adult educators, advocates, and policymakers to rethink social justice in a transnational age.

Most of the literature related to migrant domestic workers focuses on the work conditions, human rights, and legal rights issues (Choudry & Smith, 2016; Constable, 2014; Devasahayam & Yeoh, 2007; Huang, Yeoh, & Toyota, 2012; Sollund & Leonard, 2012). The literature describes the struggle of migrant and immigrant workers to secure legal rights and collaboration with unions and grassroots alternatives to create significant political and economic changes. Guo and Lange (2015) argue that adult educators need to understand the complexities of migration and immigration and reconstitute educational practices that can expand the application of social

justice, human rights, social inclusion, community resilience, and reciprocal integration.

The social relations of care work, associated with the household to the function of the labor market in Southeast Asia, provide insights about the development of significant networks of activists, advocacy groups, and NGOs in the region (Carney, 2010; Constable, 2014; Elias, 2010; Huang, Yeoh, & Toyota, 2012). These organizations provide health care, nonformal education, and legal support for the migrant population. However, the human rights discourse as a way to provide a useful vehicle for confronting inequalities and injustices, which are central to systems of migrant domestic work in Asia, is a Western critical perspective which may not be closely aligned with the perspectives of some Southeast Asian countries (Lettinga & van Troost, 2015) such as Singapore (Barr, 2002). Therefore, this article presents research about the community of FDWs and their activism that takes shape in a nonformal education program suggesting insights about Asian customs regarding social justice and the significant role of education for social mobility.

Yeoh and Huang followed up on the situation of the FDWs in Singapore in relation to gender issues intersecting with economic, social, cultural, and political concerns (Yeoh & Huang, 1998, 1999, 2009; Huang & Yeoh, 2007). Since 1978, Singapore has allowed limited recruitment of FDWs from neighboring Asian countries such as the Philippines, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka (Yeoh, Huang, & Gonzales, 1999), starting with 20,000 workers in 1978 and increasing to the current one million migrant workers in a total population of nearly 6 million individuals. As reported by the Singapore Ministry of Manpower, there were 246,800 foreign domestic workers in Singapore on work permits as of December 2017, serving a total of 1.263 million resident households.

Although the employment of FDWs in Singapore is controlled by an allocation system to their employers, the legal conditions of employment are not clearly defined and they are not yet included in the *Employment Act* (Ministry of Manpower, 2019). Singapore's "hands off" approach towards these workers and their exclusion from the *Employment Act* means that they are not protected and can face various kinds of abuse, lack of care by employers and recruitment agencies (Lyer, Devasahayam, & Yeoh, 2004, p. 13), and expulsion from the country.

With its growing elderly population, the Singapore government has put in place various social support schemes to help families who care for the elderly during their retirement years. The market for caregiver training programs has developed to offer various courses, from one-day trainings for informal caregivers to a long-term professional training under the category of nursing aid. The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) provides resources on community-based care, financial assistance schemes, and care-giving under the category *silver care*. The AIC and the Ministerial Committee of Ageing work in partnership with other ministries and agencies to address issues of active aging and employability, home-care, and family support. The caregiver's training programs supported by AIC aim to provide safe, healthy, and supportive environments for care recipients. The training is designed to assist the participants with the fundamental skills, knowledge, confidence, and positive attitudes that are needed to become professional caregivers in home environments.

The responsibilities of home education and childcare implemented by FDWs raises many questions regarding communication, relationships, vulnerability, well-being, and quality of care, all of which are unexamined in the literature about FDWs and families in Singapore who employ FDWs. Only one study, by Østbye, Malhortra, Malhortra, Arambepola, and Chan (2013), was identified, and it recognizes the FDW as instrumental support (i.e., support in activity for daily living) for the elderly in Singapore, which is associated with better care-giving outcomes. Østbye et al. (2013) recommended advancements in policies related to Singapore immigration patterns and training of and support networks for FDWs.

This article presents an initiative of FDWs to develop and implement education programs for FDWs in Singapore. This approach represents leadership shaped by the learning community of women FDWs. This initiative may be influenced by the local community-based framework that creates the structure by which the Singapore government agencies provide social assistance to the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged, through grant-makers, donors, volunteers, and Voluntary Welfare Organizations (VWOs). The VWOs play an important

role in delivering social services in Singapore, as not-for-profit entities dependent on public funding for their operations (Jones, Zhang, Jaceldo-Siegl, & Meleis, 2002; Sim, Ghoh, Loh, & Chiu, 2015). HOME is one of the nonprofit VWOs registered with The National Council of Social Service, which is involved in providing leadership and direction in social services, promoting strategic partnerships for social services, and allocating a range of funding and resources to VWOs.

Meritocracy is widely regarded as a core principle of governance in Singapore, rewarding people who “possess the right attributes” (Vadaketh & Low, 2014, p. 52). This approach is supported by Singapore’s policy of immigration that uses the recruitment of foreign workers from lower income countries as a way to substitute and upgrade the skills of the domestic labor in Singapore. The migrant worker policies that support relatively inexpensive child-care affect the fertility decisions of local families without risking local labor competition at a similar skill level because migrant workers are not allowed to work in any other occupation (Cortes & Pan, 2009). Interestingly, although in formal reports there is no indication that FDWs are the long-term care implementers for the majority of patients in Singapore (Chan, Ostbye, Malhotra, & Hu, 2013), the live-in FDWs feel the influence of the socio-cultural attitude in the local environment, which highly values education. While the lack of recognition for the role of FDWs in the health care system of Singapore is evident in the lack of training opportunities for FDWs to support their role in the patient-centered model of care (Shum & Lee, 2014), the FDWs manifest their resourcefulness in using education as a channel of activism to improve their life and transform their professional identity.

The literature related to the phenomenon of live-in care-workers often addresses the risks, vulnerabilities, and dysfunctions arising out of this segment of Singapore society. There are gaps in research on FDWs’ experiences as caregivers: their communications, relationships, care practices, knowledge, and identities. Despite their central role in home-care, there is a dearth of literature on the development and application of care knowledge by live-in domestic workers in the employer’s households and within the Singapore environment.

THE CONTEXT OF THE CASE

This case is situated in the context of a unique nonformal education program offered to FDWs in the Republic of Singapore that supports their skills and understanding of care-giving work with children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. The program, in its current state, has been offered since January 2011 by the Humanitarian Organization of Migration Economics (HOME) as part of the HOME Academy’s initiative to support FDWs’ nonformal education.

HOME is a not-for-profit, charity-based Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) that is primarily engaged in direct service provision of assistance with health, education, and legal issues and the communication of the social problems of migrant workers in Singapore. NGOs are value-based, civil society organizations working to address local, regional, and transnational problems such as, but not limited to, poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation. Grassroots support organizations (GSOs) are a specialized subset of Intermediate Nongovernmental organizations that provide services and allied support to local groups of disadvantaged rural or urban households and individuals (Boglio Martínez, 2008).

HOME services and activities are divided into a few areas: 1) running a shelter for domestic workers who left their employers’ (legal sponsors) premises and need accommodation and further support in legal or health matters while they are in Singapore; 2) a call center and counselling for migrant workers in need; 3) an education department—HOME Academy—providing programs for training and enrichment of domestic workers during their off-work day (Sunday); and 4) anti-trafficking advocacy, in collaboration with governmental agencies. The educational sphere of HOME Academy can be considered a GSO as it is active in developing programs and providing services and resources that enhance the capacity of an impoverished community (migrant workers living in Singapore) to build sustainable alternatives to their challenging life conditions.

Stakeholders, Management, and Leaders

A stakeholder of a typical nonprofit organization is any individual or group which has an interest that the nonprofit fulfils its mission, or which is affected by the nonprofit organization and its services (NPO Central, n.d.). Thus, stakeholders can be internal or external to the organization. Although the terms *leadership* and *management* are often used interchangeably, many theorists distinguish between them:

Leaders are expected to provide strategic direction and inspiration, initiate change, encourage new learning, and develop a distinct organizational culture, while managers are seen to plan, implement and monitor on a more operational and administrative level. As a consequence, there is a perception that management is concerned with resolving issues of day to day challenges, while leadership is rather concerning the big picture and promoting long term change. (Hailey, 2006, p. 3).

The initial structure of HOME suggests that its leadership is composed of a small group of long-term paid staff, external volunteers, and donors who comprise the board of directors. However, there is no traditional cut between leaders and followers, as the domestic workers, who are the followers and service beneficiaries, are encouraged to volunteer and take leadership roles, serving their own community and the social cause that the organization stands for. Domestic workers from the HOME shelter serve various roles and responsibilities within the shelter and also in other sections of the organization. HOME Academy works by delegating leadership and responsibilities to staff, volunteers, and domestic workers alike, in order to best implement programs for the benefit of the domestic worker community. As a result, people work together as a community, committed to a common purpose, sharing the work and responsibility regardless of titles or social position, which has proven crucial for the success of programs and the personal empowerment of the domestic worker population. The process of collaboration that occurs between leaders and followers is an interactive two-way relation that affects both. When leadership is defined in this manner, argues Northouse (2015), it becomes available to everyone and not only to the formally designated leader in the group. Therefore, by initiating, developing, and implementing training programs, the FDW community is not only a beneficiary but also an empowered leader of HOME Academy.

Home Academy Training Program for Caregivers

This case is focused on the development of the caregivers' training program (CTP) at HOME Academy. The CTP is the most popular course at HOME Academy, even though it is the most demanding and costly for the FDWs. The program includes two levels of courses: basic care-giving and advanced care-giving. Both these courses focus mainly on eldercare. In addition, a child-care course is offered to students who prefer to focus their training in this area rather than on eldercare. The CTP includes hands-on and theoretical study, with focus on soft skills (e.g., holistic care, emotional support, medication management, and communication skills with care recipients). Students are provided with books in English, which are printed for them by HOME Academy. The books include information that the volunteer teachers collect from various sources, and aim to follow the agenda of the Singapore government's priorities for caregivers' competencies. The advantage of the HOME Academy program is its longer courses that offer students opportunities to engage in long-term study while being supported by peers and teachers from the community of FDWs.

The CTP's initial aim is to support migrant domestic workers who work as live-in caregivers within their employer's household in Singapore. The course has been in operation since 2009 and sees ongoing change based on the needs of the participants and the changing conditions for its implementation. The number of participants keeps growing, and the locations where the courses are provided keep changing, as the organization has no permanent premises but relies on partnerships. For example, with the support from expatriates who volunteer at HOME, some of the international schools in Singapore have rented out their space to HOME Academy on Sundays. Other evolving partnerships developed with various nursing homes that allow participants of the care-giving course to have "hands-on" experience at their premises. These kinds of partnerships require constant coordination by employees in paid positions in the organization, while most of the activities are carried

out by more than one hundred volunteers. The high turnover of volunteers creates great challenges in the structure and strategy of actions. The temporary contributions of volunteers influence the directions of activities as well as the quality of services, based on the available personal and the team's work.

In this context, the caregiver's education program development is influenced by resources and input from the bottom up, and the program can be realized between leaders and followers, who are one community. The migrant domestic workers who are participating in the course (students) are highly motivated, strongly connected, and supportive of each other. The group contributes to individual confidence, empowers participants to make an effort to commit their days off to learning, and invests from their small income to join the education programs offered. Some members develop their leadership identity and skills and become course teachers, mentors—and leaders. They volunteer and commit to give back to the community that supported them, aiding other domestic workers to break through their social isolation and marginalization. The ways these women develop and empower each other is an inspirational example of leadership that develops from within, starting at the grassroots and growing upwards.

Home Academy—A Learning Community

This article is based on a dissertation study that explored questions related to education and learning processes of FDWs in Singapore who are volunteers at HOME Academy. Five Filipina domestic workers who volunteered to participate in the study comprise the team of teachers who develop and implement the care-giving training program. Supported by HOME, they were taking various training programs offered by government agencies, and some of them participated in courses provided by other private organizations and schools. These experiences created the foundation of their knowledge, which they further developed. Hence, the caregiver's education program development is influenced by external sources of knowledge and input from experiential knowledge of the FDWs as caregivers in the context of Singapore.

HOME is an example of an organization that requires leaders who can practice *engaging management* (Mintzberg, 2009), that is, they have the ability to engage with or inspire others through their thoughtfulness and humility. HOME development depends on the ability to network, negotiate, delegate, and build teams of activists. Due to limited resources, the organization's beneficiaries are encouraged to take responsibilities and leadership roles. Hence, the values of social activism on which the objectives of HOME are based lead the development of the organization and the implementation of its goals.

APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP

In recent years, the theory and practice of leadership has undertaken a significant shift away from models that focus on effectiveness as characterized by control of authoritarian systems and depending on the heroic actions of a few individuals (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Fairhurst, 2009; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), and toward models that recognize the collaborative leadership practices distributed throughout an organization (Fullan, 2002; Grant & Crutchfield, 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Western, 2013; Yukl, 1999). "The appropriateness of particular types of leader behaviors depends on the context—features such as societal values, the culture of organizations, the nature of the task, and the characteristics of followers" (Eagly, 2007, p. 2). Leadership research attempts to identify the types of leadership that are most appropriate under the conditions that are common in contemporary organizations. According to Eagly (2007), leadership styles are examined as a comprehensive range of behaviors that have a certain meaning or that serve a particular purpose.

The attitude and understanding of leadership has evolved over time in research literature. Early thinking about leadership has been influenced by the belief that leadership was innate and that some individuals were born with certain traits that made them effective leaders (Northouse, 2014). Through the development of critical theories, nonprofit organizations typically aspire to find more democratic and egalitarian forms of leadership, developing theories that recognize the limited control of leaders, promote flattened hierarchies,

distribute leadership, and allow for self-managed teams, democratic structures and rotating leadership roles.

The next section will summarize the findings from my dissertation study that may deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by Filipina FDWs who volunteer to teach care-giving at HOME Academy while they transform their identity from domestic workers to mentors and leaders in the learning community. The following discussion will focus on connections between leadership style and their expression within HOME Academy, with recommendations for ways to further nurture the leadership of FDWs.

THE QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

An exploratory case study I conducted during 2017-18 was an empirical inquiry that investigated the phenomenon of FDWs volunteering to teach care-giving within the context of a nonformal education program provided by HOME Academy for the community of FDWs in Singapore. The study aimed to explore influences on caregivers' lay knowledge development through their various experiences prior to their migration to work in Singapore, during the migration process, and as caregivers and teachers at the HOME Academy. The boundaries between phenomenon and context in this case were not clearly evident, and I had no interest in generalizing the findings. Rather, I focused on understanding the case.

Multiple sources of evidence were used based on the methodological approaches of qualitative interviewing and researcher-participant observation, and a collection of artifacts was gathered as further data. The participant observation approach afforded me a firsthand understanding of the dynamics within the organization. The set of qualitative data was subjected to interpretive analysis and used to develop an understanding of the phenomena under study. The data included personal and focus group interviews with the participants, researcher's observations, learning materials from the CTP courses, and photographs taken at HOME Academy classes and other activities. The data analysis presented multiple themes created by the narratives and behaviors of the participants, their relationships, and their engagement in multiple contexts. In the frame of this article I will introduce the participants' demographic information (See Table 1), followed by key themes that inform the discussion on leadership.

RESULTS

The data analysis generated five themes that reflect the stories that were shared by the participants:

- cultural background of Filipina FDWs
- migration choice and experiences
- caregiving
- learning and teaching
- relationships (with own family overseas, employer, care-recipients, other FDWs, and with HOME NGO)

The Filipina domestic workers reflected on their past personal and cultural history and experiences of migration, which influence their experiences at their employers' homes and with their peers at HOME Academy. Their reflections shed light on the developmental and behavioral changes that trigger and stimulate self-development. While it is evident that the migration process creates mixed feelings and challenges, the data analysis suggests that the participants are driven to migrate out of a recognition that migration stimulates a valuable developmental process that could offer them growth and success, in addition to opportunities to earn money for their families. Hence, despite the many challenges, the approach to migration experiences as a learning opportunity helps the Filipina FDWs in their adjustment to the new environment. The data suggest that the worldview and skills acquired by the participants during life experiences in the Philippines aided their adjustment to migration and acculturation as FDWs.

The data analysis indicates the connection between the life story and background of each participant (her

identity development) and the influence of the migration process, work experiences, and the role as a volunteer teacher at HOME Academy. The identities of the Filipina migrant workers are reconfigured when they arrive in Singapore to that of dependents: live-in FDWs have specific roles, limited access to resources, little privacy, and reduced freedom of mobility. Despite being a part of the employer's household, the Filipina FDWs are considered outsiders, whose real home is in the Philippines. They are outsiders who are already inside—soaking up cultural values and customs and knowledge—isolated, and yet connected.

The process of change through which a FDW becomes a professional caregiver begins with her migration experience. This requires a shift of perspective, which allows her to learn and adjust to the new environment. Similarly, her paid care work requires her “to open the heart” (Jeda, first interview) towards the care recipient, to be able to observe and learn to be in the other's space. The caregiver has to learn to migrate not only between countries and cultures, but also between self and other. The cultural capital, which may be regarded as a Filipino personal trait (Imamura, Saito, & Miyagi, 2010; Licuanan, 1994), evolves into the integrated identity of the caregiver, which is consolidated into explicit knowledge that is expressed by the volunteer teachers. By emphasizing the importance of trust and respect between the FDW and her employer, the FDW teacher constructs meaningful attachments to the relational aspect of care-giving, which affirms her cultural values as well as her history as a Filipino. Therefore, HOME Academy becomes the space for the FDWs to share experiences, transform and transfer knowledge, and negotiate identity boundaries. The following section will discuss the connections between the socio-cultural capital of the Filipina FDWs and the leadership style they manifest at HOME Academy, its impact on the participants' relationships, and the challenges of HOME Academy in developing effective education programs.

DISCUSSION

The Southeast Asian indigenous tradition highlights the importance of human relationships and the role of the individual in cultural traditions related to the community and social organizations (Bankoff, 2007). Human relationships are the core value of the Filipino culture (Clemente et al., 2008; De Guia, 2005; Francisco-Menchavez, Reyes, Mendoza, Ancheta, & Liwanag, 2018; Mendoza & Perkinson, 2003; Mansukhani, 2005; Reyes, 2015), which has a significant influence on the Filipino identity and behaviour. The Filipinos' virtue ethics form the core belief system that creates the foundations of the care knowledge of Filipina FDWs (Kehila, 2018). Recognizing the Filipina FDWs' initial perceptions on care-work as highly respectful and appreciative is fundamental for understanding their care knowledge, that develops high levels of personal motivation and self-satisfaction.

A history of colonialism in the Philippines situates adaptation as powerful cultural capital in a hierarchical government-and-citizen relationship as well as in social relationships (Abinales & Amoroso, 2017). The ability of the Filipina FDWs to learn new languages and to transform their position to one that incorporates new knowledge, access to resources, beliefs, and the ability to navigate new spaces reflects their resilience and self-management. However, in parallel to the cultural capital that was built upon during the colonial experience, the lack of self-esteem enforced by the colonizers hinders the empowerment of local leadership to grow from the grass roots. The complex influences of the colonial experiences are, therefore, intertwined in all areas of Filipinos' lives and their social relationships.

Dy (1994) discussed the colonial mentality in the Philippines, which endured for more than 300 years of Spanish colonization, followed by the American occupation. The public school system established by the Americans required that American English should be taught in the schools, and with the influence of the Americans, a new way of life was enculturated in the Philippines. However, the colonial mentality generated a lack of trust in the government (Enriquez, 1992). At the same time, dependency on foreign education books created gaps between the local education system and the people's lived experience, leading to a lack of self-esteem. The historical adaptation and incorporation of foreign cultural elements, which have been associated

with colonial power dynamics, resulted in preferences for foreign material goods and lifestyle and the tendency to look for jobs abroad to support their family financially, a trend which has been supported by the Philippine government (Licuanan, 1994; Viajar, 2011).

Bankoff (2007) described a range of neighborhood and community self-help practices in the Philippines that refer to the "togetherness" and shared identity characteristics of the Filipino people. Following such practices, I argue that the relationships of the Filipina FDWs with HOME Academy may be connected to this tradition and to the practices of social organizations. Bankoff (2007) argued that the voluntary actions taken by people in the community for their collective benefit are an expression of social capital and have led to the establishment of philanthropic religious associations that extend aid to the unfortunate and the needy. Women were noted for their involvement in these networks, and there was great pressure on community members to participate in these exchanges. These cultural and social behaviors explain why the Filipina FDWs naturally feel an obligation to support their extended family members and find it difficult to reject requests for financial support, even from other people in their home country. This cultural inclination also explains why the Filipina FDWs connect with NGOs such as HOME, and volunteer to initiate an educational program for the community of FDWs.

The wide perspective of the socio-political, cultural, and financial aspects which comprise the multilayered context of HOME Academy present a reciprocal nature of relationships within the organization, providing a context for a leadership style which values collaboration, ethical practices, credibility, and authenticity. Two leadership styles that may represent HOME leadership as a grassroots organization were identified: 1) servant leadership and 2) relational leadership; both will be briefly discussed.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) discuss the human relations movement that took the form of a *grass roots* democracy. Northouse (2014) reviews four discourses of leadership, recognizing the connection between the Human Relations Movement and *therapist leadership discourse* that is still popular in education, the public and voluntary sector, and people-focused organizations. This approach can be referred to as the *servant leadership* style, that assumes the role of the leader is to encourage and support the growth and development of everyone in the organization. The servant leader strives to serve others by investing in their development and well-being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good. The leader is mentoring others by setting an example and modelling a way of being: self-aware, humble, open, attentive to others, and willing to be changed and influenced by followers.

The servant leader's style implies sharing power and inviting participation rather than seeking to control followers. The organization lives up to its basic values and mission, and the leadership is provided by a large number of people. Leaders are, first, servants of those they lead. They are mentors, a source of information and knowledge, and they set the standards more than give instruction (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Washington, Sutton, & Feild, 2006). Servant leaders see things through the eyes of their followers, believe in them, and help them make their dreams come true. They keep their eyes on high goals, create plans, and set them into action. They are persons of thought and action—both dreamers and doers.

In many cases, the servant leader is an advocate for social change, addressing values of altruism and care (Northouse, 2015), and has a feminist, relational core (the feminist approach will be discussed later). Based on the belief that each person has intrinsic value as a human being, and that the person's worth is not determined by position in the company or any other organization, the servant leader is a role model for a more selfless than self-aggrandizing leadership style. Such a leader is not focused on scaling organizations or programs, but scaling ideas, and the more people adopt and build upon those ideas, the better the leader achieves spreading out the values and opinions they work for.

Liden et al. (2008) discuss the implication of the servant leadership style in helping employees or followers realize their potential and develop their fullest potential in the areas of task effectiveness, community stewardship, self-motivation, and future leadership capabilities. The literature on the servant leadership style suggest assessment instruments to inform servant leaders' effectiveness (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Reed,

Vidaver-Cohenn & Colwell, 2011; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). However, individual differences between servant leaders' personalities suggest emphasis on the role of values (Washington, Sutton, & Feild, 2006). This perspective is especially beneficial in organizations that include many people in leadership roles and aim to serve a specific population and social cause, such as the FDWs in Singapore.

Servant leaders serve multiple stakeholders, showing a way to build trust with employees, customers, and communities (Liden et al., 2008). One of the identified dimensions in existing taxonomies of servant leadership is relationship: "the act of making a genuine effort to know, understand, and support others in the organization, with an emphasis on building long-term relationships with immediate followers" (Liden et al., 2008, p. 162). The reciprocal nature of relationships provides a context for a leadership style which values collaboration, ethical practices and moral outcomes, credibility, and authenticity.

Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (1998) used the term "relational leadership" to describe this approach to leadership: "leadership is a relational process of people working together to accomplish change or to make a difference that will benefit the common good" (p. ix). Relational leadership is focused on leadership being purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process-oriented. The relational leadership style is all about making followers or employees feel good, and helping them get along with each other and with the management, to boost motivation and innovation. The focus of this leadership style is on the team members' emotional needs over work needs. It is focused on identifying opportunities for positive feedback and avoids performance-related confrontations. Such an attitude is most important in an organization like HOME, which is working to advocate the interests of its members and to provide a structure for self-led programs, developed by members and for members.

However, the data of this case study suggests that there is tension among the volunteer teachers, who criticized the HOME organization's leadership for not taking the responsibility to monitor the education program. They were disappointed with the leadership's ability to nurture and support the volunteer teachers. During the focus group discussion, and in the personal interviews, the participants reflected on the tensions between them using the term *crab mentality*, which refers to a characteristic of Filipino society:

One of the traits of the Filipino is being the mentality crab. We call it the mentality crab. So it means that if I see you upgrading, levelling-up, I will try my very best to pull you down. We call it crab mentality because it's the characteristic of the crab when it sees something, it will try to pull towards him... It's that trait, the Filipino... and that we cannot eliminate the mentality crab. (Mila, second interview)

So for us—we are here, our intention is good, but there are aspects, that no matter how good you are, people are going to say something bad about you... You know, it's part of life... if you think that you are a bit higher than them, they're going to pull you down... That's in the mind-set. (Marja, focus group)

The link between the behaviors of the volunteer teachers to what they defined as *crab mentality* provides insights into the role of HOME Academy as a social space where the FDWs reconnect with their cultural background. While such reconnection might help the Filipina teachers integrate prior knowledge with new experiences, it also provokes old patterns of behavior that challenge the teachers' confidence as they shift from their employers' households and transform their identities from FDW to teachers and professional caregivers on their day off. Therefore, the teachers' criticism towards HOME leadership is not only a call to create a teachers' support system but also an expression of frustration based on their own cultural behavior traits which hold them back.

The relational leadership style can be divided into: 1) Positional leadership, which refers to the traditional leadership role at the top; and 2) Nonpositional leadership, that occurs when individuals seek to deepen their involvement in an organization as members, with no interest in a top-down role. In an organization that practices relational leadership, people working together as a community, committed to a common purpose, share the work, and understand that the role of each member, regardless of titles or position, is crucial

to success. The relational model may indicate a shift in the traditional perspective on leadership, where institutional leaders saw themselves as the source of power, whereas today the interactive leaders tend to derive power from others: the team, groups, and organizations (Allen & Eby, 2012; Fullan, 2002; Uhl-Bien, 2006). However, the volunteer teachers expressed their frustration and need for some external authority, whether the employer or the leadership of HOME, to create the structure and boundaries for their new role and identity. As explained by one Filipina peer-reader who commented on the data analysis:

Filipinos are sometimes like their country's geographical form—in pieces and torn apart. No teamwork. Crab mentality—when you pull someone within your ranks from rising because of envy. During the Spanish Colonization, the “masters” had favored ones amongst the natives who did their bidding. To be favored meant some sort of power and economic advantage. And so, to gain the approval of the masters, the natives would backbite one another, so they'd replace those favored ones' position of influence. Also, the conquerors used the tactic “divide and conquer” amongst the natives. That is why, until now, it is deeply ingrained in the general psyche of the Filipinos that for you to succeed, you must make somebody else look bad rather than work harder and earn the respect. That is the reason why Filipinos are very bad at being team players. (Ime, August 2018)

Therefore, the volunteer teachers expect the management (leaders) of HOME to take the lead and help them focus on their mutual goals as educators, rather than fall into their patterns of cultural traits, which hurt them individually and create obstacles for the education program to be developed and improved. It seems that the social learning that was typical of Filipinos during colonial times hinders the development of a fully formed community of learners.

Leadership from a relational perspective is centered on the communication between the leaders and followers rather than on the unique qualities of the leader (Northouse, 2015). It is therefore suitable to use this approach in nonprofit organizations, which are based on volunteer support to develop, facilitate, and evaluate the organization's programs. A process of collaboration that occurs between leaders and followers is an interactive relationship with effects and influences extending both ways. When leadership is defined in this manner, argues Northouse (2015), it becomes available to everyone—and not only to the formally designated leader in the group. It is therefore one of the challenges faced by HOME Academy to apply this leadership approach, to avoid competition between members, and to empower all the members to take leadership roles, supporting their own interests and the community which they are part of.

The volunteer teachers develop their notions of care knowledge based on acceptance of existing mainstream training programs for caregivers, which is characteristic of the formal and commodified system of care training they encounter in both Singapore and the Philippines. The volunteer teachers attempt to follow established criteria for care knowledge by adopting teaching materials and methods from the mainstream formal education programs—whether available in Singapore or in sending countries, such as the Philippines, or through globalization. The volunteer teachers underestimate their own cultural and experiential knowledge. Only when their knowledge is recognized through relationships with experts or by adopting formal forms of knowledge are the volunteer teachers affirmed and connected to their roles and contributions as caregivers, learners, and teachers.

The weakness associated with the relational style is related to the level of performance (Eagly, 2007). In complex situations that require clear direction and control, this leadership style may not be effective. However, although HOME relies on volunteers and suffers high turn-over and a lack of skilled leaders, such weaknesses are compensated by shared interests and opportunity for personal growth. The trust and mutual dependency of leaders and followers create a context for meaningful relationships, collaboration, and shared responsibilities.

One measure of the effectiveness of HOME Academy is the growth of the student population from 70 in 2010 to 780 in 2015 and the expansion from four courses offered in the first year to more than eight programs. Grant and Crutchfield (2007) argue that high-impact nonprofits work with and through organizations and

individuals outside themselves to create more impact than they ever could have achieved alone. They may start out providing great programs, but they eventually realize that they cannot achieve large-scale social change through service delivery alone. Therefore they add policy advocacy to acquire government resources and to change legislation. Some nonprofits start out by doing advocacy and later add grassroots programs to supercharge their strategy. Ultimately, HOME needs to bridge the divide between service and advocacy and develop both to achieve impact.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE AND LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

HOME Academy is a women's organization that caters to women who are marginalized socially and politically due to their belonging to weak groups of gender, race, and class. These women are taking the opportunity to become part of a vibrant community that allows each and every one of its members to grow and develop, get empowered, and support each other. Gender- and power-linked aspects of self-identity are highly charged emotional issues that influence leaders' and followers' behavior, experience, and expectations. Fletcher (2004) argues that when women enact the kind of leadership practices that share power or enable and contribute to the development of others, they are likely to be seen as selfless givers who "like helping" and expect nothing in return. However, social interactions that make up leadership, like HOME Academy, are opportunities not only to "do gender" but to "do power." Therefore, I agree with Fletcher's criticism of the post-heroic leadership theory for incorrectly associating femininity and powerlessness.

Lord and Hall (2005) suggest the frame of identity as a lens for looking at the development of leadership skills. Values provide a framework for the development of socially sanctioned purposes and coherence in behavior across situations. Thus, values are often an important aspect of culture, and they are transmitted by many formal and informal means. Leaders play an important role in this process. The process of leadership identity development intersects with other dimensions of identity such as race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion, and social class. The Leadership Identity Development (LID) model aims to measure how people develop a relational leadership identity. Some of the questions regarding gender and relational leadership focus on how women connect their competence and confidence across LID stages, and how women's cognitive development shifts across LID stages (Komives et al., 2009). Hence, developing an education program by FDWs for the FDWs community is a significant step not only in acquiring the skills and role of a caregiver but also in transforming the identity of domestic workers to be recognized professionals. The intersection of LID and gender could be an interesting area for further research in the context of the HOME Academy.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents a case study of Filipina FDWs in Singapore who volunteer to teach care-giving. The nonformal education program is facilitated by a local NGO in Singapore. HOME is a high-impact nonprofit that builds a strong community of supporters to help achieve the organization's goals. HOME values volunteers, donors, and its beneficiaries, not only for their time, money, and commitment, but also for their advocacy. HOME builds its activities through collaboration rather than competition. The organization cultivates leadership and talent for their larger network, rather than hoarding the best people. Leaders are working in coalitions to influence legislation or conduct grassroots advocacy campaigns, without worrying too much about getting the credit. The nonprofit organization recognizes the power of teams and collaborations in collective action for social change.

The volunteer teachers use their experience of care-giving to become teachers and strive to help other FDWs develop their skills and gain confidence and self-esteem as part of a process to upgrade their professional roles, gain recognition, and increase their social status. However, the data indicate gaps in the relationships of the volunteer teachers—described by the term *crab mentality*—and their attempt to create a channel for social mobility for FDWs. The participants were not able to create solid teamwork that supports their knowledge

development in the learning community due to these interpersonal conflicts.

It is important to recognize the legacy of colonization when trying to understand the processes of creating, transforming, and developing leadership and identity by Filipina FDWs. In the Filipino experience, the influence of foreign powers led to the repression of indigenous traditions and expressions (San Juan, 2006). Colonization led to the censure and marginalization of the Filipino self, identity, values, artistic expression, and appearance, rather than a genuine recognition of the natives' humanity. The daily life and systemic effect of colonization remains in people's episteme (Mendoza & Perkinson, 2003). Therefore, the influence of social class and marginalization affects individuals as well as the culture and society.

The current challenges of the organization are in creating structural changes to help implementation of improvements in the caregivers' training program and investing in the organization's human resources. Therefore, the challenge will be in keeping the values and rationale of a non-hierarchical system that emphasizes empowerment of the volunteers that take leadership roles. HOME needs to invest in its human resources by offering teachers' training programs and team building activities to administer communication and collaboration that may help strengthen the relationships of the FDWs and their leadership. ☸

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More information about HOME can be found at: <https://www.home.org.sg/>.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF THE PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION

Year of migration to Singapore	Name & Age	Formal Education	Personal	Parents' occupations & number of siblings	Role at HOME Academy
1999	Corry (49)	College degree in education and science	Single	Parents- farmers; 9 siblings	Senior teacher
First- 1997-1999 Current- 2002	Marja (45)	College degree in fishery science	Single	Father-fisherman; mother-housewife 9 siblings	Senior teacher
2004	Mila (36)	College degree in horticulture	Single and engaged	Father-school maintenance; mother-FDW in Kuwait; 4 siblings	Senior teacher
2010	Jeda (38)	Secretarial Competency Training	Single	Parents- farmers; 6 siblings	Teacher's assistant
2008	May (36)	College degree in midwifery	Married +daughter	Parents- work at service sector; 4 siblings	Teacher's assistant

“WE ARE THE VOICE TO SPEAK UP”: CULTIVATING ADULT LEARNER VOICE THROUGH LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role of leadership training in developing voice in adult learners. Twenty-one (21) adult education programs were randomly selected for evaluation: 13 programs received an 8-hour leadership training and 12 subsequently completed a leadership project; the remaining eight served as control programs. Qualitative methods were used to analyze observational notes and videos for each program on two separate occasions, both pre- and post-leadership training. Four overarching themes were identified as essential in cultivating adult learner voice and leadership: community and collaboration, laughter and comfort, self-motivation and perseverance, and opportunity. Our findings on how adult learners in leadership roles, in contrast with learners in control settings, interacted with instructional and administrative staff and peers offer insights into and examples of learner development of voice. Finally, we present implications for staff and programs to enhance practice. Our recommendations include building relationships, fostering community and collaboration, and encouraging voice through activities.

INTRODUCTION

In a recent experimental evaluation of leadership, adult learner voice played a key role in learners' growth as leaders. After training in leadership from VALUEUSA, adult learners and staff in 12 programs developed and conducted a leadership project in community or staff awareness, communications, or fundraising to benefit the program or purchase needed materials (Patterson, 2017).

VALUEUSA envisioned that adult learners would gain knowledge and skills through leadership activities. During projects, adult learner leaders learned to share opinions and ideas. “You need to [speak] up and say what’s on your mind,” wrote a learner. Finding voice was part of actively engaging in outreach or fundraising. “I stood and told the rest of the students about what we were doing,” wrote another learner. “I learned how to communicate with others” (Patterson, 2016a, pp. 3-4).

How can staff help adult learners find and share their voices through leadership? Our findings on how adult learners in leadership roles, in contrast with learners in control settings, interacted with instructional and administrative staff provide insights into and examples of learner development of voice, as well as implications for staff and programs to enhance practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What do we mean by “adult learner voice”? An early notion of “voice” is ability “to express ideas and opinions with the confidence they will be heard and taken into account” (Stein, 1997, p. 7). Sperling and Appleman (2011) present voice as a metaphor for agency and identity, contending that voice may be both individually realized and socially constructed, lost and found, and influenced by others.

Settings Encouraging Voice

Finding voice is rooted in gaining self-confidence, understanding others’ ideas, and taking responsibility. A fundamental “benefit from learning of every kind is a growth in self-confidence” (Schuller, Brasset-Grundy, Green, Hammond, & Preston, 2002, p. 14). Schuller et. al. (2002) found that increases in self-confidence enabled adult learners to advance opinions, engage in reflective practices, and develop identity. Learners overall experienced greater tolerance for conflicting viewpoints and could adopt new responsibilities within their communities.

Adult learner voice flourishes in settings of collaboration and trust. Mezirow advocates for collaborative discourse and a trusting, inclusive, caring environment, including “equal opportunity to participate in discussion, to have their voices heard and understood” (2007, p. 15). A sense of belonging to a learning community tends to increase engagement and continued attendance (Schwarzer, 2009) and supports learner comfort in approaching peers and staff with previously unexpressed concerns (Shiffman, 2018).

Opportunity to raise questions helps optimize learner voice. Schwarzer (2009) suggests that encouraging adult learners to develop and articulate their own questions increases ownership of learning. Opportunities for asking questions are essential, especially when learners are hesitant (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017).

Voice and Learner Involvement

Involving adult learners in curriculum design, including assessing and working toward enrolling learners’ goals, fosters confidence that voices are heard and valued (Florez & Terrill, 2003; Schwarzer, 2009; Shiffman, 2018). Further, learners with a significant role in curricular design are better equipped to advocate for themselves outside education (Toso, Prins, Drayton, Gnanadass, & Gungor, 2009). Despite its documented benefits, programs adopting learner involvement are the exception, not the norm. According to Toso et. al. (2009, p. 151), “few adult education programs are *of* and *by* learners, meaning that students have few opportunities to make substantive decisions” about learning or program emphases.

Adult learners may feel timid about speaking for numerous reasons, including perceived power differentials between educators and learners (Shiffman, 2018) and even among peers (Sperling & Appleman, 2011). Ramirez-Esparza et. al. (2012) found that adult English learners with little formal education ask for help or initiate group activities less often and exhibit introverted behaviors more often than peers with more education.

Participation in adult education may encourage finding voice. For English learners, a change in viewpoint, as well as greater self-esteem and empowerment, may result from participation (King, 2000). Another study found that advanced English learners became comfortable advocating for their children, while beginning learners hesitated to exercise behavior they perceived as causing trouble (Shiffman, 2018).

Voice and Learner Leadership

For learners, making their voice heard is critical to advancing their narrative or seeking social change. One avenue for sharing such narratives is Adult Learners’ Weeks, festivals which serve to encourage involvement

in adult literacy and make successes visible to legislators (Tuckett, 2018). Hearing learner stories and viewing learners as assets to communities strengthens advocacy for them in other arenas (Kennedy, 2019).

Archie Willard, founder of VALUEUSA, argued that “learners, to become leaders, need uninterrupted opportunities to tell their life story” (NASEM, 2017, p. 37). Adult learner leadership is described as “adult learner involvement in all components of the [adult education] program and every phase of its organization and function” (Patterson, 2016a, p. 3). Furthermore, “participation in leadership activities—especially being validated by others, putting forth ideas, and having others listen to them—can enhance students’ self-esteem and sense of worth” (Toso et al., 2009, p. 157).

Higher levels of engagement can lead to gains in agency, leadership proficiencies, and connections with both peers and educators (Mitra, 2004). In a study of long-term leadership roles on a student advisory council, the council provided student leaders opportunities to advocate for themselves and utilize skills they learned in the program in outside settings. Both student leaders and staff indicated council participation enabled students’ voices to be heard (Drayton & Prins, 2008).

Voice in adult learner leaders is also needed for shared program planning and governance. Parental Advisory Council members for a family literacy program used voice to help plan curricula for adults and children, choosing topics that aligned with their own needs (Toso et al., 2009). Even where a power differential between staff and students is assumed, a co-governance model can emerge if learners are given leadership roles (Freiwirth & Letona, 2006).

After completing our review of literature, we determined two research questions for this paper. Both questions reflect the qualitative experiences of learner voice through leadership and the role that others played in fostering gains in voice.

Research Questions

1. How do qualitative experiences of adult learner voice vary after a year of adult education program participation for learners participating in leadership intervention versus learners in control programs?
2. Which examples show how adult learners gained voice during leadership participation and how others supported those gains?

METHODS

Our analysis for this paper occurred with data from a larger two-year, mixed methods leadership evaluation employing random assignment of programs. Its purpose was to evaluate how adult learners benefitted a program as they pursued their own learning and leadership goals. In 2014-15 (Year 1), 21 programs in multiple U.S. states were selected at random as either participating or control programs, and baseline data were collected from all 21 programs. Thirteen participating programs received VALUEUSA leadership training and 12 developed a learner-led project; eight control programs continued to run their programs as usual. Adult learners took surveys on educational experiences and perceptions of leadership, followed by critical thinking and writing assessments. Their interactions with staff were also observed onsite. Data collection continued in 2015-16 (Year 2), to follow up on changes that occurred (Patterson, 2016b).

Participating adult learners attended a two-step eight-hour training that focused on understanding and applying the components of leadership. Step 1 provided learners with foundational knowledge of critical thinking, how organizations are structured, and how to prioritize. Also, adults learned to identify internal and external assets and how to collaborate. During Step 2, learners and staff completed a needs assessment to recognize needs specific to their program. The leadership project topic was chosen from the needs assessment,

and the learners and the staff began discussing next steps (Patterson, 2017).

Next, adult learners and staff developed and conducted a leadership project. Twelve groups implemented leadership projects representing one of three types: awareness, communications, or fundraising. Raising awareness was the goal of five leadership projects, which focused on outreach to potential adults and tutors, awareness of adult education in local neighborhoods, or staff awareness of learners. Communications, either in the program or in the community, was the focus of two leadership projects. Five fundraising projects typically sought to raise funds to benefit the program or purchase needed materials (Patterson, 2017).

Observation and video recording permitted evaluators to measure dynamics occurring when staff and learners interacted and whether learners might speak out more after participating in leadership. An observation protocol was developed to ensure inter-observer consistency. Positions of staff, adult learners, and researchers in the room were noted, and the setting was carefully described.

Every 5-10 minutes an observer noted whether interactions were staff or learner led, following an approach described by Mellard and Scanlon (2006). In both years, staff tended to lead interactions frequently, across conditions, yet participating adult learners led interactions significantly more after leadership activities than did staff. Control learners actually spoke up even less in Year 2 than in Year 1, with staff dominating interactions (Patterson, 2017).

In settings where all adult learners gave informed consent to video-recording, interactive sessions were recorded. To provide auxiliary information on how often staff and learners spoke in sessions, we examined videos, observation notes, or both. In most settings, adult learners and staff seemed comfortable and appeared to feel safe, physically and emotionally.

Our qualitative analyses employed phenomenology, an approach used by researchers to study people's conscious experience of their lifeworld, that is their "everyday life and social action" (Merriam, 2009, p. 24-25). We reviewed 43 observation protocols, eight sets of videos, and a brief movie that consisted of Year 1 and Year 2 data. Dedoose (version 8) software was utilized for qualitative analyses. As data were reviewed, essential concepts and ideas were noted by each researcher. We discussed and synthesized our individual findings and reflections to produce four themes connecting voice and leadership.

FINDINGS

Reviewing data qualitatively as described in the methods allowed us to identify four overarching themes connected to learner voice and leadership, as displayed in Table 1: Community and Collaboration, Laughter and Comfort, Self-motivation and Perseverance, and Opportunity. These themes are embedded and cultivated in participating programs that promoted learner voice and created space for adult learners to become leaders. These themes were notably less visible in control programs. We present major findings and highlight examples of participants' voices.

Community and Collaboration

Adult learners in this evaluation thrived when a sense of community and collaboration existed within the learning space. Peter Block offers a multi-layered definition of community:

*Community... is about the experience of belonging.... The word *belong* has two meanings. First and foremost, to belong is to be related to and a part of something.... The second meaning of the word *belong* has to do with being an owner.... What I consider mine I will build and nurture. The work, then, is to seek in our communities a wider and deeper sense of emotional ownership. (Block, 2008, p. xii, emphasis in original)*

A learner in a participating center said, “Everybody wants to feel a part of something. Before I came to class, I didn’t have that, I made newer connections. It was a refreshing feeling.” “[D]on’t let others feel less important” was a takeaway for another learner. One learner succinctly stated, “I learned that I have a voice in my community.”

According to Cherrstrom, Zarestky, and Deer (2018), adult learners build community for support and learning. Based on our observations, learner leaders appeared more apt to participate and try to complete tasks. Classmates would readily help each other and encourage each other to keep trying. One participant did so by “helping and agreeing with what we had in front of us to do. Making the project even easier to go forth.” Another participant added, “And helping each person in any need they needed for our GED learning I person[al]ly help everybody. By having project we invited everyone. I spoken on every class and to let them know how important we all are to each other. We are the voice to speak up.” One learner in a participating center seamlessly led a discussion, prompting other learners for input, while translating from Spanish to English and vice versa so that learners with limited English skills could still be an integral part of the conversation. Learner leaders helped other learners to become leaders by encouraging them to lead and being supportive during the process.

In addition to peer-to-peer interactions, staff cultivating adult learner voice is important. In our observations, staff asking for volunteers to answer a question often resulted in silence, but calling on students by name almost always encouraged them to speak. Simple words of affirmation from staff such as “Very good!” led to increased learner participation during problem-solving activities. Conversely, continued negative staff feedback observed in two settings disengaged many learners. Some of the most poignant cases of staff encouraging learner voice occurred in participating centers when learners and staff were seated together in a circle, with staff providing only minimal prompts and listening to learners.

Collaboration can be defined as working with someone to produce or create something (Patterson, 2016b). Leadership projects required adult learners to collaborate to complete goals, and collaboration added to the group’s sense of community. Learners indicated reaching collaborative goals when they shared ideas, led a lesson or meeting, or became a project leader. Participants had to use learner voice to collaborate on projects and, while doing so, leadership qualities were being cultivated. One learner wrote, “I learned how important compromising can be.” Another wrote, “I learned about the importance to work in a group to decide how to resolve any problem.”

Laughter and Comfort

Laughter was a recurring theme, present in almost all observations. A key difference between participating and control centers was the way humor was used. In control centers, humor mainly served to diffuse a tense atmosphere. Staff sometimes related a humorous anecdote as a session started, and one even joked about her age, to engage adult learners and encourage them to relax. In one control center, learners whispered and laughed amongst themselves nervously in response to their teacher’s brusque demeanor in presenting the English as a Second Language lesson.

Laughter was also present in leadership settings. Teachers and learners had reached a level of comfort that allowed them to enjoy themselves and laugh with each other at common mistakes. Key to optimizing learner potential as a leader is staff understanding that an adult learner needs to be able to laugh with peers and staff. Laughter is the universal language of joy and learners appeared to need that at times to deal with the hardships of learning a new language and skill set. Everyone could understand laughter without difficulty.

At times, we noticed that laughter was self-deprecating in both conditions, especially when the learner

made a mistake that was made repeatedly, and the teacher would join in the laughing. A learner laughing at him/herself showed a level of comfort with the whole group, without negative impact. Learners assisted that person and they continued with the activity. “I learned new social interaction skills,” emphasized one adult learner.

Self-Motivation and Perseverance

Self-motivation and perseverance are essential traits an adult learner needs to complete the program. A tremendous number of environmental factors can hinder learners from starting, finishing, or reaching full potential in adult education programs. Jobs, family situations, and money are a few hardships facing adult learners (Patterson & Song, 2018). Learners appeared to want a better life for themselves and their families. A 16-year-old working toward a high school equivalency credential indicated she is usually shy and awkward but recognized a need to step out of her comfort zone: “That’s where my leadership is going to get me a job. To be a [crime scene investigator] I need to take a lot of science and will need to step up and lead.”

Children were present in many sessions we observed where childcare was lacking; despite their presence, most parents managed to keep focused on learning. Having to juggle learning and responsibility for children creates a hardship, but it appeared worth it to these participants. Being able to speak with their child’s teacher, for example, was tremendously important for parents. One adult learner wrote, “At first I not know English. At my son’s school there I held back because I not understand what the teacher say about my son.” Another spoke of the difference the program made for her: “I can now speak with the people and I feel more comfortable. I used to feel afraid. I can read for my son and speak with his teacher frequently.” Other students relayed that the program helped them learn how to buy medicine and to make healthy choices.

Adult learners are generally hard workers. Most learners worked full-time jobs or stayed at home with multiple children; still, these learners were active in the program and took on roles that benefitted them and the program. One participant joined the student council, did presentations, and tutored peers to help them reach success; she noted, “I practiced to speak up in front of a large group of people. Such as conference and workshop. Trying to help others and teaching/guiding other people usual[l]y helps you learn or reinforce what you are trying to teach or transmit. So I learnt how far you can go when you are committed to reach your goals. I won the ‘Adult Learner of the Year Award’ from [state] and I also won [a] scholarship to become a CNA”.

The theme of perseverance surfaced repeatedly in participating centers. One learner, speaking about continuing to learn English after eight years in the USA, encouraged others: “Don’t surrender! Try and try and try!” Another added, “If we have one object, one goal ... one day we’re gonna reach.” A learner seeking a high school equivalency credential incorporated concepts from leadership training into his personal goals: “Go to the base, go to the bottom, and baby steps. When I started this class, you get this imagination thing going, but it’s a bigger picture, it’s baby steps ... subtle things, but the change is slow. It’s not imaginary, it’s more realistic about what it is going to take to get there.”

Becoming leaders and helping their communities and program were important to learners. In one participating center, learners chose to create a book that detailed their personal journeys to the USA. They wrote the book to help educate the community on who they were and how they came to live there. “I strongly believe in time everyone will understand immigrants. It’s better for us to share our story. This book is really good for this community,” expressed one adult learner. The leadership project gave learners a sense of ownership in the program and helped them display leadership qualities they were developing.

Opportunity

A theme of opportunity is divided into two parts: opportunity for self and opportunity for others. By

completing the program and learning new skills, learner leaders created new opportunities for themselves. “The project help me a lot to obtain the necessary skills to get my citizenship and to have a job in [county],” said one learner. Another learner added, “[in] my job I was low low low but once I started coming to school learning ... I’m up there now, #1 sales associate for district.” Learner leaders worked hard to create ways to promote the program by using existing and new skills.

Many learners expressed such deep appreciation for how adult learning impacted their lives that they wanted others to embrace the same opportunities. One desired to “tell others about the program, how important it is and [how] much they can achieve.” Another added, “My contribution to the program is to pass the word to other[s] about this facility.”

Limitations

We note some limitations to the paper. First, while re-analyzing surveys after viewing videos, we noticed learners’ self-perceptions of leadership changed over time. In both experimental and control conditions, some learners’ leadership ratings decreased significantly. What we observed on video and in observation protocols does not mirror growth in self-rating— especially in programs receiving leadership training. Lack of self-confidence, language barriers, or misunderstanding what “leadership” encompassed until participating in the project may have contributed to those results (see Table 2).

Also, except for two learner leaders in the movie, we were unable to interview individual learners to ascertain their feelings or reactions to leadership. We had to rely on written survey comments, which was sometimes difficult for English learners.

IMPLICATIONS

Our findings suggest multiple implications for adult educators wishing to cultivate adult learner voice through leadership. Implications include building relationships of mutual respect and validation and fostering collaboration and community to allow voice to thrive. Also important is engaging learners in relevant multimodal activities. In making recommendations, we seek to offer ways to enhance practice, support positive staff-learner interactions, and strengthen community in programs.

Building Relationships

First, building relationships of mutual respect can cultivate learner voice. Adult educators expect and deserve the respect of adult learners. Although we saw inspiring examples of mutual respect in staff-learner interactions, we were dismayed to see many staff-led interactions where staff did not return learner respect and treated learners like children or as if learners could offer little to learning. Adult educators must reflect critically on their personal perceptions of adult learners overall. Key is acknowledging that learners are first and foremost *adults*—many of whom have overcome huge hurdles to reach the program—with a right to respect.

One way staff can build mutual respect is to connect with adult learners as individuals. Building a staff-learner relationship starts with asking about the adult’s life story and experiences (Mezirow, 2007; NASEM, 2017). Relationship building can occur individually when adult learners first enter or during group orientation or goal setting, and it continues as adults share life experiences with peers while learning English or tackling fractions. In leadership settings, staff can model leadership by showing respect and guiding learners to respect peers.

Another way to develop voice is through staff validation of learner contributions (King, 2000; Schuller et al., 2002; Toso et al., 2009). When adult learners share or comment during instructional or leadership

activities, staff needs to validate what learners say, communicate that their voice was heard, and build their confidence (Drayton & Prins, 2008). We noted instances in observations where a teacher would ask questions and repeatedly call on a single learner until other learners appeared to realize they would not be called on and disengaged. By engaging all adult learners, reaching out individually to hesitant learners by name, and affirming their contributions, adult educators support an environment of validation and respect.

To encourage positive interactions, adult learners need plenty of opportunity to develop and articulate questions (Schwarzer, 2009). Based on our research, learners need to answer those questions, too. While staff members are certainly resources and guides as learners gather more information, they can step back from a role of all-knowing “sage on the stage” (King, 1993) and instead validate learner questions, answers, and contributions.

Fostering Community and Collaboration

A second set of implications for cultivating learner voice involves community and collaboration. Adult educators can support voice by creating lessons that require collaboration, which in turn develops community. Block (2008) describes an environment that encourages collaboration: setting up tables for small groups, welcoming and connecting everyone, offering healthy snacks, and filling up walls with group ideas. As adult learners collaborate, community grows.

Next is involving adult learners in curriculum design or governance (Florez and Terrill, 2003; Schwarzer, 2009; Toso et al., 2009; Shiffman, 2018), which empowers programs toward leadership “*of and by* learners” (Toso et al., 2009). Leadership projects require adult learners to collaborate to design curriculum or complete program-supportive goals. Adult educators can encourage learners to share ideas, lead a lesson or meeting, or lead a project.

Encouraging Voice Through Activities

A final set of implications concerns engaging learners in relevant multimodal activities. First, activities need to be personalized and relevant to adult learners. In a participating program, for instance, adult learners with employment goals joined in impromptu mock interviews to hone employability skills. Learners practiced interviewing and gained highly relevant feedback from staff. The more adult educators can develop activities responding to specific goals that adult learners share initially, the more likely adult learners are to stay engaged. For example, if multiple English learners in a class state citizenship as a goal, activities can incorporate history, law, and government as context for learning English vocabulary. Additionally, adult educators can create opportunities for learners to share ideas on small group or tutoring topics; doing so assures learners their voices were heard.

Second, adult educators need to incorporate multiple modalities in teaching to enhance relevance. In observations and videos, we saw many examples of adult educators talking to adult learners without visuals, objects, or manipulatives. Adding photos, drawings, three-dimensional objects, manipulatives, and opportunities to write or draw offers adult learners multimodal activities. For example, one teacher in a video employed a post office handout in an English lesson. Along with written postal vocabulary, handouts showed a drawing of the post office counter, which learners could label and use to ask questions about mailing a package to family back home. Learners were actively and enthusiastically engaged in a paired activity that they could try independently later. Pictures from photo dictionaries or forms from websites could easily be incorporated into a similar lesson, so that learners see the place they are learning about and *manipulate* actual forms. Since many adults perceive themselves as hands-on or visual learners, learning through multiple modalities offers them additional ways to express themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Much remains to investigate about connections of voice with adult learner leadership. Although we surveyed learners on what they gained during leadership projects, we did not interview adults to ascertain their reactions to leadership, and future researchers could consider doing so, preferably in the adult's native language. Planning to interview adults in leadership roles at regular intervals across time would also benefit future studies, so that growth in learner voice can be measured at multiple time points as adults gain leadership skills.

Another recommendation for future researchers is to further investigate the role of humor and persistence. We were intrigued by examples of laughter in videos of staff-learner interactions. Researchers could consider how learner leaders employ humor in collaboration and communication and the extent to which learners who perceive the advantages of humor also complete a program or meet goals in their families, communities, or workplaces. ☘

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TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF THEMES CONNECTING VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

Themes	Voice	Leadership
Community and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Participation in activities • Common goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership project roles • Encouragement to each other • Helping others become leaders
Laughter and Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyment • Relationships • Self-deprecation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making mistakes and continuing
Self-motivation and Perseverance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing the unfamiliar • Sharing opinions to benefit self • Creating a better future for self and family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sacrifices to continue with program • Hard workers • Ownership of the program
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking out program • Engaging in activities that allow strengths to be utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating ideas to help program • Encouraging others to join program • Completing program

TABLE 2: CHANGE IN SELF-RATINGS FOR LEARNERS WHO COMPLETED BOTH YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2 ASSESSMENTS

Pre to Post Self-Rating Change	Control Leadership Rating (%)	Participating Leadership Rating (%)
Higher	34.1	36.7
Lower	31.7	35.0
Same	34.3	28.3

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? EXAMINING PERSISTENCE RATES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN A TEXAS ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study examined African American students' persistence rates in an adult basic education and literacy (AEL) program by juxtaposing teacher disposition that predicts student retention in an AEL program with an AEL Integrated Education and Training program (IET) as a predictor of student success. The Teacher Attribute Survey was administered to 12 Adult Education instructors from 14 different sites, as some instructors taught at more than one site. The survey measured teacher attributes such as self-efficacy, teacher philosophy (teacher-centered vs. student-centered and constructivist vs. traditionalist), and openness to change. Results indicated that there was a significance difference between student retention in a traditional AEL program and an IET program. There was also a significant difference in teaching philosophy, which was a predictor of student success rates.

INTRODUCTION

When examining educational success rates among African American students enrolled in post-secondary education, most studies examine cognitive barriers that prevent African American students from enrolling or cause them to discontinue their education (Bush & Bush, 2010). When examining the barriers to success, there are some barriers that fall inside the academic environment, but many fall outside the realm of the academic environment, which makes it difficult to narrow down one particular reason that African American students discontinue their education. Some universities have programs to help African American students in particular, but few community colleges and adult education and literacy (AEL) programs have the resources to develop programs specifically geared to help African American students become successful. As a result, students who are targeted for intervention are placed in one category: low performing or at-risk students. Hence, efforts to support struggling students are centered on support services, curriculum, and course design.

On a larger scale, to aid with student transition, acclimation into college, and student success, the state of Texas has attempted to align the curriculum and instructional model between its high schools, community college developmental education programs, and AEL programs. Since this is the model that community colleges use, AEL programs in Texas, especially those programs that are located on community college campuses, have followed the community college model in order to provide a more seamless transition from AEL into programs at the college.

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

While an effort has been made to allow for a more seamless transition from high school to college or

from AEL to college, there still is not a strong effort to increase persistence among African American students. According to Bush and Bush (2010), African American males, in particular, are “under-achieving and lag behind their counterparts in the community college system” (p. 52). With AEL aligning with the community college model, one could conclude that African American males are lagging behind their counterparts in AEL as well. According to Bush and Bush (2010), “There is a pronounced scarcity of educational literature and research about the community college system in general and African American students specifically” (p. 40). The research that does exist is centered on cognitive and non-cognitive variables (Bush & Bush, 2010).

Cognitive variables are noted as high school GPA and test scores, while non-cognitive variables are noted as attitudes and perceptions. However, most research has not examined institutional characteristics as a factor for African American student success (Bush & Bush, 2010). Bush and Bush (2010) go on to say “Despite the findings . . . several scholars maintain that cognitive and non-cognitive factors alone cannot determine academic performance” (p. 42). Wood and Williams (2013) posit that research on student persistence, in general, has been based on Tinto’s (1975, 1987, 1988, 1993) theory that suggests students will be more committed to an institution, and therefore stay the duration, if they integrate themselves into the institution. Wood and Williams (2013) describe Bean and Metzner’s (1985) model as the other major framework used to examine student persistence. However, Bean and Metzner’s framework is based on nontraditional students’ persistence and suggests that nontraditional students are influenced by external circumstances more often than how well they integrate into an institutional setting. Reddy (2012) suggests that:

Research should examine to what extent the messages of ABE and higher education faculty and institutions emphasize the behavioral and work ethic aspects of being a student and to what extent they make explicit the cognitive and metacognitive expectations they hold of students. (p. 168)

Reddy (2012) also identifies the need for a study to examine the culture of ABE versus the culture of community colleges. Notably, researchers should look at behavioral expectations and “approaches to studying that are developed in community college vocational certificate programs to those in degree programs. . . . This would clarify what would be needed . . . for a student to successfully transition from a certificate program to a degree program” (p. 168). Wood and Williams (2013) also note that current research on African American student success has been criticized for having “methodological challenges, i.e., using mean tests for predictive modeling” (Wood & Williams, 2013). While cognitive and non-cognitive variables are important to examine, teacher disposition, classroom climate, and instructional models should also be examined as they pertain to African American student persistence. If there is a significant relationship between any of these factors and African American students’ success, it could inform AEL administrators of best practices in course development and hiring decisions.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a connection between persistence rates among African American students in Adult Education and Literacy programs and instructional models or class climate. The study analyzed teachers’ disposition/class climate and instructional models in one Adult Education and Literacy program at 25 locations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural mismatch theory of inequality is the framework for the study. An APA report (2012) defines cultural mismatch theory as a misalignment of student and teacher cultural expectations. The theory highlights interdependent norms, which are common among African American students, and independent norms, which are common on college campuses.

Research Questions

The research was based on the following questions:

1. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs and the persistence of African American students to complete such programs?
2. Does a statistically significant relationship exist between teacher attributes and the persistence of African American students to complete a program?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations to the study are that the percentage of African American students entering AEL is very low. It is a possibility that the motivation of African American students who decide to enter the program will be unaffected by class climate or IET programs. Other limitations to the study are that the study was conducted using one program. In addition, some of the off-site locations are in areas where the student population is predominantly white.

Assumptions

This study assumed teachers were honest in their survey answers, all of which pertained to their attitudes and their perceptions of students. This study also assumed that the AEL teachers were a representative sample of the population.

Summary

The study sought to determine if African American students' persistence was influenced by teacher disposition or attitudes. It also examined the influence of instructional models, such as education and vocational training courses, on African American student persistence. The findings will be beneficial to AEL administrators as they make decisions regarding instructional models and hiring of staff. These findings will be significant to AEL instructors, as they make decisions related to curriculum and class climate.

MOTIVATIONS TO LEARN

According to Wlodkowski (2008), there is minimal research on the connection between learning and motivation because the connection seems obvious. Wlodkowski (2008) goes on to say that "instructors have long known that when learners are motivated during the learning process, things go more smoothly, communication flows, anxiety decreases, and creativity and learning are more apparent" (p. 6). However, Wlodkowski (2008) does suggest that "outstanding effort can be limited by the learner capability or by the quality of instruction" (p. 6). As an example, Wlodkowski (2008) discusses an extraordinary math student who gives maximum effort but cannot succeed in a math class because of poor instruction or culturally irrelevant material. Wlodkowski goes on to say that a person's cultural background can determine the way they perceive effort, and people with different backgrounds can perceive effort differently.

One factor that influences a student's motivation to learn is *meaning*. The way learners wrest meaning from the information they receive will have a positive impact on their ability to learn. Merriam (2001) notes that adults are intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated; hence, motivation is said to come from within. However, Holmes (2016) suggests, "Intrinsic motivation to achieve academically in college is not the initial impetus to motivate the majority of black students from low income and/or first generation backgrounds to be successful" (p. 6). First generation Black students are extrinsically motivated "...through the college culture by intangibles, like mutual respect, equal treatment, structured programs, and a sense of belonging" (p. 6).

Teacher Disposition

Teacher disposition is said to influence students' motivation to learn. "Dedicated teachers, who possess the

right dispositions, can be the keys to reach students who do not come from wealth or privilege” (Helm, 2007, p. 109). Likewise, Wasicsko says that teachers are unsuccessful when they do not have a positive disposition (as cited in Brumbaugh, 2015). Wlodkowski (2008) supports this notion in saying that “attitudes help us feel safe around things that are initially unknown to us” (p. 105). Thus, if a teacher has a negative attitude toward a student, the student is not likely to feel safe, and the teacher will not be successful in reaching this student. Brumbaugh uses Wong’s definition of an effective teacher, indicating effective teachers have positive expectations of the students (as cited in Brumbaugh, 2015). If a teacher does not have a positive expectation of the student, the student is likely to act out. According to Harme and Pianta, “Students with significant behavior problems in their early years are less likely to have problems later in school if their teachers are sensitive to their needs and provide frequent, consistent, and positive feedback” (as cited in Helm, 2007, p. 109).

Racial and Ethnic Identity

Racial and ethnic identity are said to have an impact on learner experiences. According to a report by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2012), the benefits of “a sense of belonging to, or shared heritage with, a group are clear, and there is a growing body of literature on the relationship of these constructs to other important constructs, including academic achievement” (p. 52). Thus, it is important for a student to feel connected to the group or at least establish a group to which he or she belongs.

The APA report also notes that “the construct of identity is intricately linked to educational disparities, and includes not only the question, “‘Who am I?’ but also ‘Who am I in this social context?’ and ‘To what groups do I belong?’” (APA, 2012, p.52). According to Wlodkowski (2008), “Learners who feel alienated achieve less than those who do not” (p. 104). One reason that a student may feel isolated from a group is a negative relationship that the student has with his or her teacher. Hence, the APA (2012) report suggests that “Current research investigating teachers’ expectations and relationships with students suggests teacher-student interactions may have a role in maintaining or expanding these educational disparities” (p. 49).

Low expectations for minority students’ achievement is explored in the cultural mismatch hypothesis. “The cultural mismatch hypothesis suggests a mismatch between student and teacher cultural expectations for behavior in which behavior that may be considered normative by students is interpreted as hostile, threatening, and defiant by teachers” (APA, 2012, p. 51). These assumptions about minority students contribute to educational underachievement (APA, 2012). Thus, the APA report cites McKown and Weinstein to further highlight that “A critical component of ethnic and racial minority children’s development is growing awareness of their status as a member of a stigmatized group” (as cited in APA, 2012, p. 52).

The ABEL Classroom

Some African American students who fail to assimilate in their K-12 classrooms and end up dropping out of high school find themselves in an adult basic education and literacy (ABEL) classroom, but many who drop out do not enroll in an ABEL program. Quigley’s study found that “participants made a conscious decision not to attend ABEL programs because of unpleasant schooling experiences” (as cited in Drayton and Prins, 2011, p. 2). African Americans who do decide to enter an Adult Basic Education classroom enter with the same negative attitude towards education, one that is based on their previous experiences. This negative attitude could influence persistence to complete the program. As Drayton and Prins (2011) note, “A key tenet of adult education is that learners’ experiences are resources for learning” (p. 1). If a learner enters the classroom with negative learning experiences, as almost all adult learners who enter Adult Education do, the learner creates his or her own barriers to learning. It is up to the AEL staff to remove these self-imposed barriers for the students. Sheared concluded that “because our perceptions shape how we interact with others, program staff must adopt a critical reflexive practice that questions their assumptions about who adult learners are and

how they are encouraged to participate” (as cited in Drayton and Prins, 2011, p. 1). Taking African Americans’ negative perception of school into account can yield a favorable outcome. Thus, “adult educators must employ a culturally relevant pedagogy that considers the realities of African American men’s daily lives” (Drayton & Prins, 2011, p. 1). Many of the teachers they face in Adult Education programs are the same teachers, or at least they perceive them to be the same, as the ones that they faced in the K-12 system. Thus, it is important for teachers to take into account that “adult learners’ negative early schooling experiences can enable adult educators to help students create counter narratives through positive learning experiences that envision success and the accomplishment of goals” (Drayton & Prins, 2011, p. 1).

There is, however, a difference between the environment in the AEL classroom and the K-12 classroom. For one, there is not as clear of a distinction between the haves and the have-nots. Correspondingly, the curriculum is designed to be culturally inclusive. The textbooks include stories about African Americans and other minorities. Textbooks have replaced common names like Tom and Jane, which have been associated with the dominant social culture, with names like Pedro and Elena. Also, the stories deal with everyday issues to which students in AEL can relate. There are also programs designed to help motivate students to either obtain their GED or re-enter the workforce.

I-Best

One program that has had success in retaining adult education students is called the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program. According to Wachen et al. (2010), “I-BEST was developed in response to the recognition that although adults with a high school education or less could benefit from postsecondary occupational education and a credential, too few such individuals enter and succeed in college-level training” (p. 2). The I-BEST program seeks to remove barriers by “combining basic skills and professional technical instruction so that basic skills students can enter directly into college-level coursework” (Wachen et al., 2010, p. 2). The I-BEST program has taken on a new name, Integrated Education and Training (IET), and is just one of several programs offered under the Career Pathways initiative. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014) notes the key aspects of the IET, which includes work preparation and workforce training.

The IET initiative was developed in response to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in 2014. According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2016), this act recommends that program services, educational training, and employment training be aligned so that students will experience greater outcomes in college and career readiness. Recommendations for the program include holistic advising and case management to help students better meet their goals.

Cultural Mismatch Among African Americans

According to Riddle (2014), many teachers do not realize that race is important in schools, and they are unaware of cultural norms that are specific to students from different racial and ethnic groups. Riddle further notes that “most are not cognizant that these differences affect the way adults view and interact with their Black . . . students” (p. 45). Cultural mismatch in schools is said to affect four areas: “Language learning, delivery of curriculum, school culture, and student behavior” (Riddle, 2014, p. 6). When a cultural mismatch exists, it creates a disenfranchisement among Black students (Riddle, 2014). Moreover, Delpit notes that disenfranchisement is apparent when curriculum design, school structure and organization, instructional approach, language, and accountability systems mirror norms associated with the dominant culture (as cited in Riddle, 2014).

Language is an important part of culture and of identifying with a particular group. Riddle (2014) suggests, “historically marginalized students often utilize different languages at home and in school” (p. 45). Students are often caught between two distinctly different cultures. “Often, the language codes used by the majority

of African American . . . students reflect the culture of home life and the communities where they live. These language codes are also race based” (p. 45). Because of assumptions about language and behavior, teachers and students often misunderstand each other; these “misunderstandings of cultural codes are often confused with student misbehavior or contribute to the student misconduct” (Riddle, 2014, p. 45). On the language spectrum, African Americans who are able to demonstrate language and behavior that is acceptable to the dominant culture may experience rejection by other Black students (Riddle, 2014). They may be accused of “acting White” (Riddle, 2014). “Thus, ownership of one’s home or native language among other cultural codes becomes essential” (Riddle, 2014, p. 45).

Lack of culturally relevant teaching materials and respect from teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher are also said to perpetuate a cultural mismatch. Ladson-Billings says that teaching practices which are culturally relevant could bridge the achievement gap for African American students and hiring more African American teachers could help (as cited in Riddle, 2014).

When students experience this cultural mismatch, they feel threatened, which can create a barrier for learning and successful outcomes. In essence, students are rejecting the system from which they feel disconnected, rather than the education, as Riddle (2014) suggests: “students resist uncaring nonresponsive schooling (not education)” (p. 5).

Because of the difference in cultural norms, a mismatch exists between African American students and their teachers. Race is said to be “implicit in this mismatch,” as African Americans “often come from different places and they have different experiences than those of their teachers, which creates an incompatibility between the two in the areas of language use, values, and social norms” (Riddle, 2014, p. 45). To highlight the disparities that exist when there is a cultural mismatch, Riddle (2014) cites Fruchter’s notion that “the majority of students experiencing failure in schools are Black” (p. 4). Riddle (2014) goes on to say that the “gap between Black [students and] their White counterparts further indicates that race matters in schools.” (p. 4). Riddle frames her research with the conclusion drawn by Valenzuela that “schools have to be more open to understanding the nuances within and across various ethnic groups to provide appropriate caring and respectful support and relationships” (as cited in Riddle, 2014, p. 45).

Summary

According to the literature, teacher disposition, motivation to learn, the way a student identifies within the classroom, and school setting are all contributors to African American students’ lack of persistence in the K-12 system. This misalignment of cultural social norms results in a disconnect between African American students and the dominant culture’s power. These circumstances also influence motivations to learn, which Wlodkowski (2008) considers to be the key element in the learning process.

African Americans stopping out of school occurs because African American students and teachers do not have similar student-to-teacher or teacher-to-student expectations. They have different language codes, social norms, and behavioral expectations. When African American students do, however, align their social norms with the dominant group’s expectations, they experience a lack of acceptance from their Black peers and are oftentimes accused of acting “White.” In an effort to combat the instance of students stopping out of school, it is apparent from the literature that AEL programs are engaging in the use of culturally relevant materials in the classrooms. AEL has also created Career Pathways and IET solutions so that students may complete work training while they are completing their high school equivalency credential. Despite this, it is still questionable whether independent social norms are responsible for African American students stopping out of AEL programs. After reviewing the literature, it is apparent that cultural mismatch of inequality is the appropriate framework for the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A causal study was conducted to compare African American student persistence in IET programs with their persistence in traditional AEL classes. This study also examined class climate based on attributes of AEL teachers and investigated African American students' hours of attendance in AEL programs for six months. African American student persistence to complete 40 hours of instruction in stand-alone ABE/ASE classes was examined. Class climate for each class, based on teacher attributes, was examined to determine if climate impacts African American students' persistence to complete 40 hours of instruction. The independent variables were teacher attributes and IET instruction. Class climate was assessed using teacher attribute surveys. The dependent variable was persistence to complete a program. Persistence to complete a program was determined using student enrollment and attendance records. Data were collected from the teacher attribute surveys, student enrollment records, and attendance in the TEAMS data management database and tested for significance.

Measures (Data Collection)

Teacher attribute surveys, developed by Rachel Vannatta Reinhart (2004) were used to assess teacher self-efficacy, attitudes toward students, beliefs about student behavior, and attitudes towards change. Data relating to students' attendance and persistence were obtained from the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) database for the classes in which teachers have volunteered to participate in the research. TEAMS houses student information such as race and ethnicity, TABE test scores, hours of attendance, the site at which they are attending classes, and programs in which they are enrolled. Data obtained from TEAMS included student pre- and post-test TABE scores. The scores examined were reading, language, and math. Pre- and post-test scores were examined to determine if students made progress in the previously mentioned content areas. Data were obtained from TEAMS that delineate the persistence and completion of IET for African American students who are funded under the Career Pathways grant and the AEL federal grant.

Data Analysis

Teacher attribute surveys, focused on independent versus interdependent culture, were distributed to teachers. Instructors were asked to respond to questions in a Teacher Attribute Survey (TAS) that measured four variables: Teacher Self-Efficacy, Teacher Philosophy 1, Teacher Philosophy 2, and Openness to Change. Teacher Philosophy 1 measured the degree to which an instructor is teacher-centered or student-centered. Teacher Philosophy 2 measured the degree to which the instructor is a constructivist or traditionalist.

Research Findings

The researcher extracted a report from TEAMS which showed the names of African American students in each of the 14 ASE/ABE classes. The researcher looked at the profile of each student to determine how many hours he or she had attended and whether or not he or she was also enrolled in an IET program. The researcher sorted the information per class. Students who were in an IET class and students who were enrolled in only an ASE/ABE class were juxtaposed. A Chi-square test was used to determine if there was a significance difference in hours of attendance between students in ABE/ASE classes and those who were enrolled in an IET class. In addition, the researcher organized the participant data obtained from the TAS into categories according to the four variables measured: Openness to Change, Teacher Philosophy 1, Teacher Philosophy 2, and Teacher Self-efficacy. The researcher sought to determine to what extent each teacher attribute had a significant impact on student hours of attendance. Using this information, four ANOVA tests were run to see if there was enough difference in teacher attribute in each of the categories to warrant further analysis. If the teachers had the same views, it would be impossible to determine if their dispositions influenced student hours of attendance. However, if there were a significant difference in teacher attributes within the variables, the researcher would be able to further analyze the data and compare the hours of attendance in the classes.

The findings are presented in the next section

Research question 1

Does a statistically significant relationship exist between Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs and the persistence of African American students to complete such programs? A Chi-Square test with an alpha of .05 was calculated to determine if there was a significant difference between the hours of attendance among African American students in ABE/ASE classes and African American students in an IET program. Table 1 shows the results of the Chi-square test, which indicate that there is a significant difference between African American hours of attendance in a traditional ABE/ASE classroom and African American hours of attendance in an IET program at the $p < .05$. $\chi^2 (1, N = 86) = 0.74$. There is a significant relationship between participation in an IET program and persistence to complete 40 hour of attendance. African American students who enrolled in an IET program persisted to complete 40 hours of attendance more often than those who were enrolled in ABE/ASE classes not paired with IET instruction.

Research question 2

Does a statistically significant relationship exist between teacher attributes and the persistence of African American students to complete a program?

Research question 2a. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the teacher attribute of self-efficacy and persistence to complete program among African American students? In order to answer this question, first an ANOVA test was run to determine if there was a difference between the teachers' self-efficacy. If a significant difference existed between teacher responses to self-efficacy questions, further analysis was conducted in order to determine if a relationship between teacher self-efficacy and students' persistence to complete 40 hours of attendance existed. If a significant difference between the teacher responses to self-efficacy questions did not exist, there was not enough evidence to conclude that self-efficacy influenced student attendance. Table 2 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which indicates there was not a significant difference between the teachers' responses to self-efficacy questions at the $p > .05$. [$F(11, 60) = 5.094, p = 1.42$]. Since there is not a significant difference between teacher self-efficacy, it was determined that self-efficacy did not influence student persistence to complete 40 hours of attendance in a program.

Research question 2b. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the teacher attribute of Teacher Philosophy 1 (teacher-centered vs. student-centered) and persistence to complete program among African American students? An ANOVA test was run to determine if there was a significant difference between the teachers' philosophy of teaching. If the ANOVA indicated a significant difference between Teacher Philosophy 1, further analysis would be conducted to determine if Teacher Philosophy 1 significantly influenced student persistence to complete program. Table 3 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which indicates that there is a significant difference between teachers' philosophy 1 at the $p < .05$. [$F(11, 72) = 2.44, p = .001$].

Because there was a significant difference in Teacher Philosophy 1 among teachers, a Tukey post hoc test was run to determine which participants differed in their philosophies. The results indicate that the mean scores for participant 8 ($M = 1.57, SD = 1.512$), participant 9 ($M = 4.42, SD = 1.61$), participant 11 ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.79$), and participant 12 ($M = 4.14, SD = 1.46$) are significantly different from one another as well as all other participants (see Tables 4 and 5).

Looking at the percentage of African American students who completed 40 hours of attendance in each participants' class, the group of participants ($N = 4$, participants 8, 9, 11, and 12) whose survey results were significantly different from the rest of the participants had a higher percentage (80%) of their students complete 40 hours of attendance. The remaining surveyed participants ($N = 6$) had an average of approximately 54% of their African American students complete 40 hours of attendance. It is important to

note that two out of the original eight participants in this group were excluded from the calculation of 54% because these participants only had one African American student in their class. Although both of these students completed 40 hours of attendance, they were omitted from the calculation because the sample size was too small ($N = 1$). It is also important to note that two of the instructors in this group of participants had individual attendance records of approximately 80% for African American students. However, it is also important to note that these two instructors were the only full-time instructors in the group. All instructors teach the same number of hours, but full-time instructors have additional office hours.

Research question 2c. Is there a statistically significant relationship between teacher attribute, Teacher Philosophy 2 (constructivist vs. traditionalist), and persistence to complete program among African American students? In order to answer this question, first an ANOVA test was run to determine if there was a difference between the teachers' philosophy 2. If the ANOVA revealed a significant difference between teacher responses to constructivist and traditionalist questions, further analysis would be conducted in order to determine if a relationship existed between Teacher Philosophy 2 and students' persistence to complete 40 hours of attendance. Table 6 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which indicate there was not a significant difference between the Teacher Philosophy 2 at the $p > .05$. [$F(11, 36) = 1.17, p = 0.34$].

Research question 2d. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the teacher attribute of Openness to Change and persistence to complete program among African American students? An ANOVA test was used to determine if there was a difference between teachers' openness to change. If there were a significant difference between teacher responses to Openness to Change questions, further analysis would need to be conducted in order to determine if a relationship existed between Openness to Change and students' persistence to complete 40 hours of attendance. If no significant difference existed between the teacher responses to Openness to Change questions, there would not be enough evidence to conclude that Openness to Change influenced student attendance.

Table 7 shows the results of the ANOVA test, which indicate there was not a significant difference between teacher responses to Openness to Change at $p > .05$. [$F(11, 36) = 1.55, p = 0.15$]. Thus, no ad hoc tests were needed.

Summary of Research Findings

The study compared African American students in ASE/ABE classes with African American students in Integrated ET classes in order to determine if there was a difference in African American students' persistence to complete 40 hours of instruction in an IET program and African American students' persistence to complete 40 hours of instruction in an ASE/ABE class. This study moved beyond the traditional exploration of African American students' educational experiences and narrowed the focus to African American students in AEL because there is very little scholarship on this topic.

The first part of the study addressed the first research question. The researcher sought to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between participation in an IET program and persistence to complete program among African American students. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in African American students' persistence, in that they were more likely to complete 40 hours of attendance if they were enrolled in an IET program.

The second part of the study sought to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between teacher attributes and persistence among African American students. Teacher Philosophy 1 was the only variable that yielded a significant difference in the teachers' responses. Since there was a significant difference in teacher responses to questions pertaining to Teacher Philosophy 1, a post hoc test was run to see which teachers' responses were different. These results were further analyzed by examining the percentage of African American students who completed 40 hours of attendance in each of their classes. The results

indicated that the teachers whose survey results were significantly different from the rest of the participants had a higher percentage (80%) of their African American students complete 40 hours of attendance. The results of the other three variables (Openness to Change, Teacher Philosophy 2, and Self-Efficacy) showed that there was no significant difference in the teachers' responses to the questions.

The study did confirm Brumbaugh's (2015) belief that teacher disposition is a major factor influencing student academic success. Likewise, the study supports Knowles' claim that adults have a need to "feel accepted, respected, and supported" in their classrooms (as cited in Merriam, 2001, p. 5). In the study, Teacher Philosophy 1 (student-centered vs. teacher-centered) was the only variable that yielded a significant difference in the teachers' responses. The results indicated that the teachers whose survey results leaned toward student-centered were significantly different from the participants whose results leaned toward teacher-centered. Teachers who were student-centered had a higher percentage (80%) of their African American students complete 40 hours of attendance.

IMPLICATIONS

Educational funding in Texas is tied to performance. AEL program administrators must examine ways to retain their African American students in order to meet their performance measures. Adult Education administrators must identify instructors who are willing to stay current in their practice and who have the attributes that will complement students of every race and ethnicity. It is important that these teachers take into account that addressing "adult learners' negative early schooling experiences can enable adult educators to help students create counter narratives through positive learning experiences that envision success and the accomplishment of goals" (Drayton & Prins, 2011, p. 1). To illustrate, Delpit describes student disenfranchisement, which occurs when instructional approach mirrors norms associated with the dominant culture; this power structure threatens students (as cited in Riddle, 2014). Students threatened by the dominant culture's social norms are said to experience a cultural mismatch, which affects student behavior (Riddle, 2014). A teacher-centered approach that is aligned with the dominant culture's social norms is said to negatively affect educational outcomes of African American students. Students in this AEL program were more likely to complete 40 hours of instruction in classes where the instructors were student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Student-centered classroom environments are less authoritative than teacher-centered classroom environments.

In addition, programs that provide adult education students with employable skills prove to be important. One factor that influences a student's motivation to learn is meaning. When traditional AEL academic instruction is combined with work skills instruction, the motivation to learn stems from a desire to enter the workforce or make gains in the workforce. The way a learner wrests meaning (gaining employable skills) from the information that they receive will have a positive impact on their ability to learn. This meaning intrinsically motivates students to learn. The cultural mismatch theory posits that meaning is also wrested from participation in a community. Community membership and interdependence develop as a result of the cohorts that are established in IET programs. In this study, African American students in this AEL program who were co-enrolled in an IET program were more likely to complete 40 hours of traditional, academic instruction. Thus, administrators should continue to build their IET programs, adding more job skills training models that will attract and retain more African American students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined quantitative data gathered from teacher attribute surveys in an attempt to distinguish differences in their dispositions. Quantitative data were also gathered from databases to distinguish

differences between African American students' persistence to complete 40 hours of attendance in ABE/ASE and those who were co-enrolled in an IET program. However, qualitative data would likely add value to the study. Interviewing African American students about their perceptions of their instructors would provide more information on teacher attributes through the lenses of African American students. Equally important, developing a survey that would measure students' preferences for teacher attributes might give more insight into the needs of African American students. This data would be helpful for administrators who make faculty hiring decisions. It would afford administrators, who are often far removed from students, the ability to gain insight on African American students' preferences that go beyond the blanketed teacher rating survey that is given to students every semester. Practitioners can use this information to examine the structure of their classrooms and make adjustments to inadvertent aspects of classroom environments (dominant culture social norms) that can be viewed as exclusionary.

SUMMARY

Previous research on African American students' post-secondary success has examined cognitive variables. This research focused on teacher attributes and a program geared toward putting students in the workforce while they earn their GEDs. This research indicated that African American students were more successful in completing 40 hours of instruction when they were enrolled in an IET program, which teaches academic skills simultaneously with work skills necessary to gain employment. This research also showed that there were positive results for African American students who were enrolled in traditional classes in which the instructors took a student-centered approach to teaching. None of the other attributes examined had a significant impact on student retention.

It is crucial for instructors in Adult Education and Literacy programs to stay current in their practice and to subscribe to the latest pedagogy, which tends to be more inclusive and culturally relevant. Adult Education administrators must identify instructors who are willing to stay current in their practice and who have the attributes that will complement students of every race and ethnicity. Also, programs that aid adult education students by providing students with employable skills prove to be important, as African American students involved in these programs were more likely to complete 40 hours of traditional, academic instruction. Thus, administrators should continue to build their IET programs, adding more job skills training models that will attract more African American students. ☘

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TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN ABE/ASE CLASSES AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN AN IET CLASS

	Chi-Square	DF	P-Value
Pearson	0.112	1	0.738
Likelihood Ratio	0.114	1	0.736

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY IN ABE/ASE CLASSES

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-Value	F crit
Between Groups	80.1528	11	7.286616162	5.093556929	1.4226E-05	1.952212
Within Groups	85.8666	60	1.430555556			
Total	165.986	71				

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER PHILOSOPHY 1 IN ABE/ASE CLASSES

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	47.55952	11	4.323593	2.448417	0.011714	1.924308
Within Groups	127.1429	72	1.765873			
Total	174.7024	83				

TABLE 4: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO TEACHER PHILOSOPHY 1

Factor	N	Mean	StDev	95% CI
Participant 1	7	3.143	1.574	(2.142, 4.144)
Participant 2	7	3.429	0.979	(2.427, 4.430)
Participant 3	7	3.571	0.535	(2.570, 4.573)
Participant 4	7	3.571	1.134	(2.570, 4.573)
Participant 5	7	3.714	1.254	(2.713, 4.716)
Participant 6	7	3.714	1.113	(2.713, 4.716)
Participant 7	7	3.143	1.215	(2.143, 4.144)
Participant 8	7	1.571	1.512	(0.570, 2.573)
Participant 9	7	4.429	1.618	(3.427, 5.430)
Participant 10	7	3.571	1.272	(2.570, 4.573)
Participant 11	7	4.714	1.799	(3.713, 5.716)
Participant 12	7	4.143	1.464	(3.142, 5.144)

Note: Pooled StDev 1.32886. Grouping information using the Tukey Method and 95% confidence level.

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF TUKEY'S PAIRWISE COMPARISON

Factor	N	Mean	Grouping	Grouping
Participant	7	4.714	A	
Participant	7	4.429	A	
Participant	7	4.143	A	
Participant	7	3.714	A	B
Participant	7	3.714	A	B
Participant	7	3.571	A	B
Participant	7	3.571	A	B
Participant	7	3.571	A	B
Participant	7	3.429	A	B
Participant	7	3.143	A	B
Participant	7	3.143	A	B
Participant	7	1.571		B

Note: Means that do not share a letter are significantly different.

TABLE 6: SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER PHILOSOPHY 1 IN ABE/ASE CLASSES

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>F</i> crit
Between Groups	18.75	11	1.704545	1.168831	0.3418	2.066608
Within Groups	52.5	36	1.458333			
Total	71.25	47				

TABLE 7: SUMMARY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OPENNESS TO CHANGE IN ABE/ASE CLASSES

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>F</i> crit
Between Groups	22.22917	11	2.020833	1.55615	0.154611	2.066608
Within Groups	46.75	36	1.298611			
Total	68.97917	47				



THEORY TO PRACTICE

LEADING THROUGH LOSS: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND TURBULENCE IN ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

When a loved one dies, there is no real order to the grieving process. It is common for a family to feel guilt, yearning, anger, and despair. Often, the cause of death can amplify these feelings. School leaders in all contexts are tasked with helping the school community navigate the turbulence that follows the deaths of community members. This case study focuses on applying Turbulence Theory and Multiple Ethical Paradigms to lead through loss in an adult secondary education (ASE) setting.

A PERSON DIED

Philadelphia has had over 300 homicides annually for six of the last 10 years, with an average of 298 homicides per year from 2009 to 2018. As of June 9th, 2019, Philadelphia has had 140 homicides; this is a 9% increase from this time last year (Philadelphia Police Department, n.d.). I have come to realize that it doesn't actually matter where Philadelphia ranks nationwide by number of homicides because these numbers are tragic all on their own. These numbers are the reason I watch the nightly news broadcasts and why I have a Google Alert set up for the term "Philadelphia homicide." These numbers are the reason that we call and text every single one of our students every time they are absent from school.

The headline read "39-Year-Old Mother of 2 Ambushed, Shot to Death After Parking Her Car in East Oak Lane, Police Say" (CBS3Staff, 2019). I read it and I felt sad that someone's family was dealing with loss. I felt especially sad about the manner in which this woman was killed—shot at close range, in her car, in front of her own home. I didn't imagine, at any point, that this was one of my students. In fact, I didn't know that this was one of my students until students began arriving with screenshots from Facebook and text messages that confirmed the heartbreaking news: A member of our community was dead.

Things escalated quickly and gossip began to swirl almost immediately. There were unconfirmed and unfounded stories about the dead student's gang affiliation, rumors about what she was doing out so late at night, and outright speculation about how her family would retaliate. Students arrived throughout that afternoon with a variety of stories about the murder. One student told us that the deceased was set up by a friend. Another told us that the murder was orchestrated by the police as revenge for a lawsuit. A third student stated that this was over an unpaid debt. Class was going to begin in 30 minutes.

(RE)ACTING QUICKLY

I knew that the longer I waited to act on this news, the more difficult it would become to navigate this turbulent circumstance. I called each teacher into my office as they arrived and informed them of the facts we had. I told each of them quickly, and plainly: One of our students was killed on Saturday morning in front of her home. We do not think that anyone here is in any danger.

I informed each teacher that I did not have any more information than what was reported in the news, but that school leadership would come around to each of the classrooms tonight.

I instructed teachers to take time for themselves if they needed, but that we would still hold classes that night. The teachers agreed that if students expressed severe emotional distress, they could go directly to the counselor or social worker. Otherwise, the teachers would answer questions as plainly and accurately as possible.

Once each teacher was ready to start class, I conferred with the leadership team to assemble concise and sincere messaging about what we knew. Based on our understanding of grief and loss, we agreed that we needed to acknowledge the student by name, acknowledge that she was dead, reassure the students that they were safe at school, and offer them resources for emotional support.

Together, the leadership team made it around to each class before first period ended. We presented the same message to each class, but to a variety of reactions. Some students cried loudly and others tuned us out by putting in their earbuds. There isn't only a single way to grieve.

ETHICAL PARADIGMS

School leaders in all contexts are often called upon to help their school navigate the death of a community member. This is, without a doubt, one of the more difficult tests in an adult secondary education (ASE) setting because adults do not grieve in the same way as young children. While young children may cry, scream, cling to trusted adults, or engage in “magical thinking,” surrounding the cause of death, adults are less likely to exhibit such behaviors (NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee, 2015). Since there are “social and cultural pressures that influence how the [grieving] urges are expressed or inhibited,” adults may often hide their grief or grieve in a way that seems unusual to ASE practitioners. (Parkes, 1998). Based on modern understandings of adult grief and bereavement, we know that adults “often try to avoid reminders of the loss and to suppress the expression of grief,” (Parkes, 1998). How can our understanding of multiple ethical paradigms help us navigate such turbulence?

In *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education: Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Complex Dilemmas*, Joan Poliner Shapiro and Jacqueline A. Stefkovich (2016) cultivate the notion of multiple ethical paradigms. While the ethic of the profession was presented in detail by Shapiro and Stefkovich, the ethics of justice, critique, and care were first offered by Starratt in the article “Building an Ethical School” (1991).

The ethic of the profession asked me to consider first what was in the best interests of the students before I considered what was in the best interests of the staff and local community (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). This paradigm dictated that I make decisions based on my students' need for physical and emotional safety. In this case, I made sure all students knew that they were physically safe at school and that school was a place where they could be emotionally vulnerable due to the presence of the counselor and social worker.

Second came the ethic of care. This paradigm asked me to consider who would be helped and hurt by my decision-making and how I would navigate this circumstance in a way that would help the most people long-

term (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). I knew that informing all of the staff and students almost immediately about the death would cause some short-term emotional harm, but I weighed that carefully against the long-term harm caused if they felt the school was hiding something from them or was deceiving them. I decided on my course of action based on the supposition that my students and staff would be best served by being able to grieve together.

The ethic of justice asked me to consider whether there were any laws, rules, procedures, or contracts that would help me make this decision (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). I was careful to consult our existing student and teacher handbooks when allowing students and faculty time to grieve, but I was also careful about not revealing our student's home address or any additional information without first consulting her family.

Upon reflection the next morning, I turned to the ethic of critique. This paradigm required that I consider who made the rules and procedures that I followed the previous day, whom those rules served, why they were made, and whether they were truly adequate for this circumstance (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). This led to us writing a standard operating procedure for such circumstances.

TURBULENCE THEORY

In his book, *Promises Kept: Sustaining School District Leadership in a Turbulent Era*, Gross (2004) defines and develops a gauge to depict the level of emotional intensity in schools. This turbulence gauge is based on how pilots would describe the level of turbulence that an airplane experiences during flights. From light turbulence, where there is barely any movement or distress, to extreme turbulence, where the entire organization is in jeopardy, the gauge helps us understand how to make ethical decisions. Our understanding of turbulence theory also informs how we think about shielding the school from turbulence or using turbulence to facilitate meaningful change (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

In this case, the overall level of turbulence was moderate, sometimes bordering on severe. There was obvious, widespread awareness of the issue as students began receiving news of the death before staff members were even aware. At times, the level of turbulence oscillated towards severe as students and staff felt that they might be at risk. In considering how best to proceed, I realized that this was not a situation where we could use turbulence to make change but an instance where we needed to decrease the level of turbulence to help everyone process the death.

As the day continued, I was mindful of the specific moves I made to bring down the level of turbulence. Informing the teachers first so that they could be ready to have honest conversations with the students was one way to decrease the level of turbulence, while coming around to each class and offering emotional support services was another. I also considered how to bring down the level of turbulence long-term. I texted and emailed all students a list of resources for grief counseling in case they didn't want to connect with the emotional support staff at the school because we know that people grieve at different rates.

We need to consider positionality as a factor affecting turbulence in this case (Gross, 2004, 2014). A person's perception of the turbulent incident and the amount of turbulence they felt depended on their position at the school, the length of time they had been there, and how close they were to the deceased. For example, one of our longest-tenured teachers perceived this to be a low-turbulence incident because her classroom culture and established routines would help her and the students navigate this incident. On the other hand, students who were fairly new to the school but close to the deceased perceived this to be an extremely turbulent incident, with two of those students not returning to school in the week following the death.

We should also consider the cascading effect of turbulence as factors often compound to make a situation more turbulent (Gross, 2004, 2014). In this case, the situation was made more turbulent by the manner of death and the timing of our discovery that the student had died. These factors had a cascading effect that increased the levels of turbulence for nearly all positions, but I also considered the other factors that may have had a cascading effect if we were not more careful in how we addressed the incident. For example, how might the situation have cascaded if we did not directly address it with all students or how might the turbulence have increased if teachers were not informed?

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Turbulence theory and multiple ethical paradigms are a largely unexplored area in ASE. We look forward to working with adult basic education (ABE) and ASE practitioners in urban areas to refine this work and assemble a collection of case studies to consider ethical paradigms and turbulence theory in contexts outside of traditional K-12 education. ☘

Arkadiy Yelman is the founding leader of One Bright Ray's Mansion Adult Campus, an evening school for adult students seeking a high school diploma. Leading from a community-building perspective, Arkadiy helped establish numerous partnerships as the school rapidly expanded. Arkadiy spent his early career teaching social studies to credit-deficient high school students and maintains democracy, ethics, and citizenship as the basis of his practice. Arkadiy's research interests include adult secondary education and adult literacy.

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THE POWER OF POSITIVE LEADERSHIP: AN EXAMINATION OF LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES BASED ON POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, APPLIED NEUROSCIENCE, AND THE LEARNING SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Viewed from the perspective of an action verb, and not just as a position occupied by the elite few, positive leadership drives productivity, employee engagement, and performance. Specifically, the field of positive psychology has gained momentum. Its emphasis on personal well being, and constructs like hope, optimism, and a focus on awareness of strengths offers insights for individual and group development. Neuroscience advances in the 1990s and beyond shed light on what leaders need to know about how brains function and how this knowledge can guide decision-making concerning colleague motivation with more intention than chance. The learning sciences provide a framework for understanding the process of learning and the ability to create innovative learning environments. These fields, positive psychology, neuroscience, and the learning sciences, offer valuable insight into practices that should guide program and employee development more effectively. Key recommendations for leaders resulting from this review of literature include: leading from a strengths-based perspective, creating meaning using job-crafting strategies, crafting inspiring and motivating feedback, increasing productivity with a focus on wellness, and evoking positive emotions.

INTRODUCTION

Viewed from the perspective of an action verb and not just as a position occupied by the elite few, positive leadership drives productivity, employee engagement, and performance. The challenge to provide such leadership is not new. The struggle of educational leaders to engage staff while offering consistent, high-quality instructional programs that increase learner success is an ongoing conundrum. Fortunately, three areas of research completed in the last two decades offer new theories with innovative solutions. Specifically, the field of positive psychology has gained momentum. Its emphasis on personal well being, and constructs like hope, optimism, and a focus on awareness of strengths offer insights for individual and group development. Neuroscience advances in the 1990s and beyond shed light on what leaders need to know about how brains function. This knowledge can guide their decision-making concerning colleague motivation with more intention than chance. The learning sciences provide a framework for understanding the process of learning and the ability to create innovative learning environments. The learning sciences further what we know about how the brain approaches learning with the distinct goal of making learning more effective. These fields, positive psychology, neuroscience, and the learning sciences, offer valuable insight into practices that should guide program and employee development more effectively.

This article integrates literature on positive psychology, applied neuroscience, and the learning sciences to

identify key leverage points that leaders may use to engage employees and create positive work settings. Its purpose is to introduce the impact positive psychology and applied neuroscience has made on both leadership and education. Five leadership topics will be discussed. These topics include strengths-based perspective, job crafting strategies, feedback, wellness, and positive emotions. Taken together, their aim is to increase positivity, engagement, continuous improvement, and performance. Practical applications will be shared with an emphasis on the value of these five leadership topics in programmatic and classroom settings.

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Complex challenges and urgent demands to create change in the lives of adult learners beckon effective leaders. Changing federal requirements, limited funding, and the focus on learner success and transition add to the complexity. Leadership that is viewed as an action and not as a position contributes to productivity, employee engagement, and performance. Whether, as individuals, we lead from a national perspective, a state office, a local program, or a classroom, a leadership approach based in positive psychology, neuroscience, and the learning sciences holds promise to create the opportunities and change the field of adult literacy requires.

Leadership success in the adult literacy field faces many challenges. Current limited resources do not align with higher performance expectations. ProLiteracy's 2017-2018 Annual Statistical Report (2019) highlights that only 38% of literacy programs have paid instructors, 50% of instructors are over the age of 60, and 65% of member programs operate on budgets less than \$150,000. Educational leaders and administrative and instructional staff are working in environments where doing more with less has become the standard, where performance-based measures are paramount, and where 24/7 availability is expected. Ironically, while employees are often tasked with more goals than are acceptable or achievable, they are not being utilized for the skills and talents that they bring to the program, nor are those skills developed due to budget and time constraints. The result is an overworked and underutilized employee with extremely low engagement.

The challenge of low engagement is well-documented outside of adult literacy. The State of the American Workplace survey by Gallup Inc. indicates that "70% of American employees are 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged'" (2019, p. 12). This lack of engagement has troubling consequences. Engaged employees are enthusiastic about and committed to their work and their workplace, drive performance and innovation, and move the organization forward in a positive direction. Troublingly, employees who are not engaged or actively disengaged do not positively contribute to organizational goals or move the organization forward. Subsequently, Gallup identified that leadership is a key to engagement and that "managers account for at least 70% of variances in employee engagement scores" (Gallup, 2019). Educational leaders must realize their critical contribution to their program's level of engagement.

In environments where educational leaders and administrative and instructional staff are highly engaged, high quality instructional programs are delivered and learner success is maximized. The leadership question that beckons is, "How can leaders help people thrive and excel in their work environment?" Part of the answer lies in positive psychology's focus on helping others thrive and excel. This emphasis aids organizational and programmatic success because the parts that make up the whole are productive, engaged, and most importantly, happy. To further support environments where success is possible, leaders can find more help in research from positive psychology, applied neuroscience, and the learning sciences. This article's contents summarize and evaluate findings from those key research areas to suggest a leadership path where both people and performance can thrive.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Proposed leadership strategies in this article draw from emerging research in positive psychology, neuroscience, and the learning sciences. This section provides readers with a brief theoretical foundation for these three content areas. From this theoretical base, practical leadership recommendations are offered for immediate application by educational leaders and administrative and instructional staff.

The positive psychology movement arose from the desire to research and explore the healthy aspects of people. Until Martin Seligman's 1998 presidential address to the American Psychological Association, the focus of psychology was on pathology, what goes wrong in our lives, and how that damage can be repaired. Seligman proposed that the field instead focus on what is right with people and how the field can encourage its growth. Positive psychology "is the scientific study of what enables individuals and communities to thrive" (International Positive Psychology Association, 2019). The emerging field studied positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Early promoters of positive psychology were Seligman (2002), Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Boverie and Kroth (2001), and Luthans (2002) who believed that humans had positive core values and that they should be developed and celebrated (Boverie, Grassberger & Law, 2013). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) framed both an individual and group positive psychology focus, stating, "At the individual level, positive psychology is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent and wisdom" (p. 5). On the group level, positive psychology highlights the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology has been one of the most influential schools of thought in the field of psychology. Recent research on positive psychology includes research regarding constructs such as resilience, appreciative inquiry, empowerment, gratitude, psychological capital, work engagement, supervisor and organizational support, positive teamwork and co-worker relations, and positive leadership (Fleck, Kozikowski & Mills, 2013). Positive leadership refers to leadership styles that emphasize the motivational and ethical characteristics and behaviors of leaders that result in positive employee outcomes and increased performance. This article explores how concepts from positive psychology can be employed to lead others. When viewed as a highly engaged and intentional action, not simply as a position that one holds, leadership is a skill that can be built and developed. Positive psychology research shows that harnessing positivity on a team or organizational level can translate to increased employee productivity and a greater sense of satisfaction for individuals.

Neuroscience informs this article. There have been tremendous advances in neuroscience in the past two decades. Since initiation in 1990, when President George H. W. Bush declared the "Decade of the Brain," scientists greatly advanced our understanding of the brain. A continuous stream of advances has shattered long-held notions about how the human brain operates. These advances have led to growth in many other fields—psychology, economics, education, law, and particularly leadership. Neurobiology, the study of the biology of the nervous system including the brain, provides insight into how human behavior and motivation can be directed to the strategic and operational goals of an organization (Swart, Chisholm & Brown, 2015). An educational leader's knowledge about directing human behavior and energy translates to improved organizational performance and sustainability. A deeper understanding of our collective brain functioning can be a great asset to leaders developing themselves and others.

Advances from neuroscience have informed a paradigm shift in the science of learning. Researchers Nathan, Rummel, and Hay (2016) identified that the learning sciences grew from the realization that powerful methodological approaches and theories were needed to understand the complexities of learning

and behavior. This exemplifies a shift from cognitive sciences, where the focus was cognition, to a new emphasis on crafting learning environments and experiences. The learning sciences provide a framework for understanding the process of learning and the ability to create innovative learning environments. The learning sciences further what we know about how the brain approaches learning with the distinct goal to make learning more effective. Our workplaces are ideal settings for the application of the science of learning through employee learning and development. Learning science research translates into meaningful, evidence-based employee development, thus increasing engagement.

This article's contents are arranged into sections that synthesize theories from positive psychology, applied neuroscience, and learning sciences to promote thriving people and performance. Leadership strategies are presented and each has a foundation in one of the three key areas. Each section concludes with practical, evidence-based recommendations for application to programs and classrooms.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY 1: STRENGTHS-BASED LEADERSHIP

For the last 30 years, researchers from the Gallup organization have studied the conditions under which excellence occurs. They have concluded that those who productively focus on areas where people excel create the greatest opportunities for success. Gallup's research of more than 2.24 million employees in 221 organizations from 1999 to 2001 shows that people gain more when they focus on the areas where they are strong than when they concentrate on areas where they are deficient (Clifton & Harter, 2003). This perspective of focusing on strengths has gained wide support. American psychologists Martin Seligman and Donald Clifton created revolutionary careers by asking a simple question: *What is right with people?* The strengths-based approach shattered the long-held notion that the path to excellence is through the mitigation of weaknesses.

While managing weaknesses may assist in counterbalancing their negative effects, it will not help one to excel. Strengths are a foundational concept within the field of positive psychology. The Centre for Applied Positive Psychology defines strengths as "our pre-existing patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior that are authentic, energizing, and which lead to our best performance" (Biswas-Diener, 2010, p. 21). McQuaid and Lawn (2014) shared that in its simplest form, a strength is something you are good at and that you enjoy doing. Understanding and positioning people according to their strengths makes for both a more positive workplace and happier workers. Often, this results in less turnover, more productivity, and greater loyalty.

An aspect of strengths-based leadership is the awareness of when certain behaviors or tasks are not within one's area of individual strength. A driving philosophy of the strengths-based approach is that when these areas are identified that the person does not push to be the best in all aspects, but instead delegates or partners with those who have strengths in those areas where they are not as naturally inclined (Barnes & Larcus, 2015). Leaders can use this knowledge to build well-rounded strengths within their team, thus allowing employees to work to their strengths and filling gaps when there is a difference between available and needed strengths.

A strengths-based leader is one who identifies, understands, and applies their unique talents and abilities to their leadership style. What is right, what is going well, and how can we focus individuals on what they do best? These are questions that a strengths-based leader asks. The strengths-based leader appreciates what has worked and what is working, identifies underused strengths within the team, and finds new ways to use those strengths. The true benefit of the strengths-based leader is that they are better able to maximize a team's peak performance by allowing each person to explore ways they can engage their strengths, identifying and executing the type of tasks that energize them, and providing opportunities to continue to do what they do best.

An initial step in becoming a strengths-based leader is learning to identify strengths. Robert Biswas-Diener, the respected researcher, psychologist, coach, and expert in positive psychology, presented three questions to identify strengths in yourself and others:

- What are some of the things from your past about which you are most proud?
- What energizes you in the present?
- What are you looking forward to in the future? (2010, p. 27)

Once educational leaders have identified their strengths, they are prepared to institute a culture around strengths. Educational leaders may encourage their teams in defining strengths, identifying strengths when they are observed, sharing activities for strengths-spotting, and other strength-based team tasks. The positive emotions created by focusing on strengths are contagious. As others become skilled at identifying their personal strengths, they will be better equipped to identify strengths in others. Ultimately, educational leaders and instructors who employ a strengths-based approach will empower learners to see the good and positive aspects of themselves and encourage those strengths to be used to tackle new or challenging situations (Barnes & Larcus, 2015). This trickle-down effect has far-reaching positive consequences and the ability to positively influence the lives of learners. Strengths offer a simple way to make a big difference.

Recommendations for Application: Focusing on Strengths

- Start with you. Leaders must acknowledge and model their strengths before they can appreciate and leverage the strengths of others (Greenberg & Maymin, 2013). Read and study a strengths-based model. The references section of this article is a comprehensive starting point.
- Choose one strengths assessment. There are quality free and low-cost ways to accomplish this. Choosing one encourages the entire team to engage in the same strengths vocabulary.
- Label, spot, and develop strengths to promote energy, effectiveness, productivity, and a sense of meaning. Crafting work with strengths consistently will add to one's self-confidence and effectiveness.
- Embed strengths conversations in team meetings, faculty development, and day-to-day engagement. Set up an online forum so that the group can engage in conversation about strengths, find creative new ways to engage strengths, and foster collaboration between diverse strengths.
- Classroom recommendation: Introducing learners to their strengths offers the incredible self-awareness to help learners in all areas of their life. Engage them in the same strengths assessment and work through strengths-based activities as a group.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY 2: MEANING IN WORK

Though fundamentally, most people work to earn a living, research shows people also work to experience a sense of meaningfulness, make an impact, build relationships, and contribute to purposes greater than themselves (Rodell, 2013; Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). Discretionary energy, like discretionary income, is the energy that people have a choice about how to spend. When people see their work as important, they are willing to give it their discretionary energy. Leaders have the opportunity to connect people to their purpose and directly influence at least three of the four major sources of meaning in work: the self, other persons, and the work context, as identified by Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski in 2011.

Foundational research in the area of meaning in work from organizational researchers Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz (1997) differentiated how employees orient themselves to their work: as a job, as a career, or as a calling. Those who considered their work as a job focused on the material benefits work provided and viewed work as a means to acquire the resources needed to enjoy life outside of work. Those describing their work as a career demonstrate a personal investment and view achievements not simply from

material benefits but also from their ability to advance within their profession (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Finally, those connecting their professional work to that of a calling focused on the "enjoyment of fulfilling, socially useful work" (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997, p. 21). Later research by Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2011) postulates that one's orientation to work can be altered when job crafting, the "physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (p. 179), occurs. Job crafting allows employees to change the design and social environment of their work. Job crafting changes the meaning of work as employees adjust the job tasks and environment and reframe the purpose of the job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2011).

Job crafting presents a way for employees to create personal meaningfulness, fulfill interests, and use individual strengths in their work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2007). Job crafting is "the process of employees redefining and reimagining their job designs in personally meaningful ways" (as cited in Dik, Byrne, and Steger, 2013, p. 81). Job crafting allows one to personalize one's job by incorporating one's motives, values, strengths, and passions. Job crafting allows employees to redefine their job responsibilities based on interests and strengths.

A specific form of job craft, time-spatial job crafting, "refers to the extent to which employees reflect on specific work tasks and private demands, actively select workplaces, work locations, and working hours, and then potentially adapt the place/location of work and working hours or tasks and private demands to ensure that these still fit to each other," (Wessels et al. 2019, p. 2) thereby optimizing person-environment fit. Time-spatial job crafting has been positively correlated to outcomes in terms of employee well-being, performance and work-life balance (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008). Educational leaders can explore ways in which job crafting could occur within their organizations or, more directly, within their teams. Consider whether it is essential that administrative staff and instructors work from a centralized location. The nature of academic work aligns well with the concept of time-spatial crafting. As job crafting is correlated with higher levels of motivation, motivated and inspired administrators and instructors transfer their passion to their learners.

Research is clear that job crafting can increase an employee's feeling of meaning, satisfaction, and enjoyment within their job. It can also increase an employee's performance because the employee is participating in enjoyable work that feels valuable and meaningful. Commitment to one's position and loyalty to an organization are built when employees enjoy their jobs and feel that their jobs align with their strengths and values. This is where they thrive.

Recommendations for Application: Encouraging Meaning Through Job Crafting

- Encourage job crafting. Share the concept of job crafting with senior leadership and determine support. If not immediately adopted, consider crafting a micro-culture of job crafting within your team or group of instructors. Use a strengths-based approach to encourage job crafting based on individual strengths. Experiment with providing flexibility to employees so that they can make conscious choices about work responsibilities.
- Create more meaningful work opportunities through conversations with staff and instructors. Use the "who/what/when/where" approach by asking the following questions.
 - Who: How could I change my social interactions so that they are more rewarding? Who are my most rewarding interactions with at work? Who am I not interacting with that I might like?
 - What: What are the tasks of my job that I like, and what are those I don't like? How can I increase those I like and decrease those I don't? Can I modify disliked tasks to make them more enjoyable?
 - When: When I do I my best work during the workday? Am I at my best when I am alone or within a group?

- Where: How do you feel about the space that you consider distinctively “yours”? What changes could you make so that your workspace feels more pleasant or inviting?
- Classroom recommendation: Following a conversation about strengths, a conversation about job crafting helps learners to understand which attributes might be important to them in a work setting. Bring awareness into how one works best and what various occupations require in workforce readiness discussions and activities.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY 3: FEEDBACK

Feedback is essential to goal pursuit. The ability to provide feedback is particularly relevant to effective leadership where it is provided to support awareness of one’s self, learning, and performance improvement. Regulatory focus divides individuals into two groups: those oriented to a promotion focus and those oriented to a prevention focus. A promotion focus emphasizes “hopes, accomplishments, and advancement” and sees goals as ideals (Higgins, 2019, para. 3). A prevention focus conversely emphasizes “safety, responsibility, and security” and sees goals as oughts (Higgins, 2019, para. 3). Regulatory fit occurs when an individual can apply their preferred strategy in the pursuit of their goal. Researchers Jarzebowski, Palermo, and van de Berg (2012) explored how motivation is either increased or sustained through framing feedback to one’s regulatory focus with the specific subject of promotion focus. Their 2012 study concluded that “framing the content of a feedback message according to individuals’ preferred goal pursuit strategy (eager) and preferred type of goal (achieving ideals) may increase the value of feedback, consistent with increased motivation” (p. 23). This research indicates the potential value of crafting feedback in alignment with the employee’s regulatory focus to maximize motivation for behavior.

Advances in brain science have helped us understand how neuroplasticity and learning connect. Criticism, or negative feedback, engages the sympathetic nervous system. When this occurs, we switch into a “fight or flight” perspective that encourages our brains to only focus on those aspects that will be necessary to survive (just like our ancestors being chased by tigers). The strong negative emotions produced by critiques “inhibit access to existing neural circuits and invokes cognitive, emotions, and perceptual impairment” (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018).

Instead, coaching for performance improvement that initiates from a personal or organizational vision has been shown to stimulate the positive emotional attractor (PEA), and positive emotions, which activate the brain regions associated with “big picture thinking, engagement, motivation, stress regulation, and parasympathetic modulations” (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018). Providing data-driven feedback before focusing on the desired organizational outcomes typically results in a person focusing in on gaps, weakness, and negativity (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018). “Focusing people on their shortcomings doesn’t enable learning; it impairs it” (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019, p. 97). Skillful feedback is a two-way conversation, which focuses on specific behaviors and the result or impact of those behaviors. Understanding how behaviors are impacting co-workers and the organization can be a powerful motivation to change.

Recommendations for Application: Giving Positive and Motivating Feedback

- Individualize feedback based on your staff’s and instructors’ regulatory focus. When sharing new program requirements around pre-and post-testing, align the conversation with the individual’s regulatory fit. For example, those with a promotion focus would prefer to hear about how the new policies and procedures encourage getting closer to a goal, while those with a preventive focus would prefer to hear how the new policies and procedures would assist the program with staying in compliance.

- Feedback is directed at the future, not the present—distinguishing between what is right and wrong at the present moment and discussing what needs to happen to make that work better in the future. Help visualize what it looks like and then provide a plan/steps to get there.
- Classroom recommendation: Leading learners to success through feedback is just as beneficial as professional feedback. Consider the regulatory focus of your learners and craft feedback to align with it.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY 4: PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH WELLNESS

Physical activity has long been recognized as important for the improvement of the quality of life and increased lifespan. The biological basis for exercising and its impact on the brain has been well researched and discussed. Neurobiological advances aid understanding of how brain-derived neurogenic factor (BDNF) and neurotransmitters, including serotonin and dopamine, increase neuroplasticity and neurogenesis in the brain (Cassilhas, Tufik, & Tulio de Mello, 2016). BDNF is essential to improving learning and memory (Foadoddini, Afzalpour, TaheriChadorneshin, & Abtahi-Eivary, 2018) and cognitive flexibility (Ratey, 2008). The exploration into the chemical and structural changes in the brain that accompany physical activity gives evidence to the benefits that exercise has on cognitive ability. Persons who are physically more active have better performance on cognitive tasks, including those that involve executive function (Ratey & Loehr, 2011). Cognitive flexibility, an executive function, reflects the ability to shift thinking and “to produce a steady flow of creative thoughts and answers as opposed to a regurgitation of the usual response” (Ratey, 2008, p. 54). Translated into workplace learning, exercise and wellness directly impact an employee’s ability to gain and retain new knowledge and to be a creative contributor to program challenges.

Wellness does not rest solely with physical exercise. Though not uncommon in Silicon Valley, it is rare to walk into an organization and see employees playing Ping-Pong. Stuart Brown, a psychiatrist and founder of the Institute for Play, suggested that using our hands for play is directly related to problem solving (Ludvik, 2016). Our brain has two dominant models of attention. One is when we are engaged with focused attention, called the talk-positive network, and the other is when the mind is not engaged with focused attention and is wandering, called the talk-negative network. When one is functioning, the other is not (Ludvik, 2016). Time spent in task-negative networking mode seems to enhance brain functioning, specifically in areas connected to learning and development like problem solving, creativity, attention, and memory. This “downtime” for our frontal cortex is beneficial. You have experienced the benefits of this downtime when you gained insight into a problem or challenge only after you finished actively working on it.

The emerging research on physical activity, wellness, and the brain demonstrates the connection to favorable outcomes such as increased cognitive ability and executive function. To minimize gaps that exist between knowledge and practice, educational leaders and administrative and instructional staff should aim to share widely the information on the benefits of physical and mental exercise. Exploring ways to engage staff and learners in physical activity reinforces the important connection between health and learning.

Recommendations for Application: Encouraging Wellness and Brain Breaks

- The relationship of exercise to brain health and functioning suggests a connection between learning goals and habits of exercise (Martinez, 2010). Encourage employees to take breaks to walk outside. Set up yoga mats in an empty office. Begin a friendly fitness competition.
- Encourage play. Play can include games, art, recreational readings, music, comedy, talking, and daydreaming. Incorporate these elements into the workday, as simple as putting coloring books in a common area or encouraging employees to schedule “downtime” to get outside and enjoy nature.

- Classroom recommendation: Be aware of the time learners are required to be focused on academic work. Research insights into attention, creativity, and exercise should prompt you to incorporate breaks into your academic sessions. Connect health literacy lessons to improved cognitive function and learning.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY 5: POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Barbara Fredrickson, a researcher and faculty member at the University of North Carolina specializing in positive emotions, explained that positive emotions serve two critical functions: they broaden our perspective and build psychological capital. In terms of the first proposition, positive emotions “broaden an individual’s momentary thought-action repertoire: joy sparks the urge to play, interest sparks the urge to explore, contentment sparks the urge to savor and integrate” (Fredrickson, 2004, p. 1367). Positive emotions widen the scope of thoughts and actions that arise. The second key proposition of the theory shares the consequences of this broadened perspective. By broadening “an individual’s momentary thought-action repertoire—whether through play, exploration, or similar activities—positive emotions promote discovery of novel and creative actions, ideas, and social bonds, which in turn build an individual’s personal resources: ranging from physical and intellectual resources, to social and psychology resources” (Fredrickson, 2004, p. 1367). Psychological capital refers to the emotional reserves that people use to deal with difficult situations. Fredrickson’s research suggests an ideal 3:1 ratio of positive emotions to negative emotions for well being.

Princeton University psychologist and Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman explored how people evaluate an experience. His research team found that people employ a mental shortcut to recall events, using the average of the peak of their experience and the end of the experience. Psychologists refer to this as the peak-end rule (Greenberg & Maymin, 2013). The peak is the point of the experience that has the highest energy. To illustrate the point, consider that you and your colleague attend the same conference. The peak of the conference, the keynote speaker, is the same for both of you. You both choose different ending session of the day—one of you has a terrific experience with an engaged and relevant presenter. The other session is dull, boring, and a waste of time. Later, when asked to evaluate your experiences, the person who attended the engaging session at the end is more likely to positively rate the conference, while the one who choose the boring session will rate the entire conference less favorably. In your meetings, consider how you can end on a high note. Consider these prompts: What did you find most useful in this meeting? Or who in the organization should we commend for a job well done? This is a simple way to create energy from a meeting and not drain your team’s energy.

When we are in a good emotional place, we are “more open to possibilities, more creative, and full of an internal reservoir of energy” (Greenberg & Maymin, 2013, p. 145). Analyze required meetings and consider eliminating those that are excessive, unproductive, and zap energy instead of boost it. Consider your one-hour meeting with 10 team members, which equates to 10 hours that your team could spend serving students, mentoring instructors, or moving a project forward.

Recommendations for Application: Building Positive Emotions

- Start strong. There are many ways to start a meeting with a positive tone: Ask a positive question, recognize an individual or team for outstanding effort, or share a funny story. Consider this positive prompt: “Tell me the best thing that has happened to you since our last meeting and invite a few team members to share.” Just a few minutes before jumping into your agenda can set the tone for the entire meeting. This positive start opens the opportunity for your team’s creativity and innovative perspectives (Greenberg & Maymin, 2013).

- Practice the peak-end rule in your group interactions. Strategically craft your peak and end experience.
- Classroom recommendation: Emotions influence learning. Model positive emotions, use classroom activities that engage positive emotions, and adhere to the peak-end rule during class sessions.

CONCLUSION

Positive leadership drives productivity, employee engagement, and performance. This article integrated literature on positive psychology, applied neuroscience, and learning sciences to identify key leverage points that leaders may use to engage employees and create positive work settings. Five leadership topics were discussed, including strengths-based perspective, meaning in work, feedback, wellness, and positive emotions. Recommendations to increase positivity, engagement, continuous improvement, and performance were shared.

Recent research in these key areas of positive psychology, applied neuroscience, and the learning sciences provide new perspectives and tools to lead through evolving and complex challenges. In practice, many of the strategies shared may positively influence employee engagement through positive workplace cultures and leadership strategies. Increased optimism, productive programs, and maximized student success are not only possible, but probable, outcomes of these strategies. By continuing to develop others and ourselves as leaders within the field, we solidify our commitment to lifelong learning and demonstrate our commitment to the learners that depend upon us. ✂

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INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

NECESSARY ASSIMILATION OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR THE ADULT LEARNER

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ABSTRACT

Under the leadership of Governor Ivey, the residents of Alabama are getting the post-secondary education needed for in-demand careers. The Alabama Community College System is tasked with promoting WIOA Title II adult education programs, postsecondary career and technical education programs, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I adult programs. Calhoun Community College Adult Education is part of this progressive movement to raise the employability of the residents of Huntsville, Alabama, and surrounding communities. The unemployment rate in Alabama is 3.7% compared to the national average of 3.6%, so why the giant push for career readiness? The current U.S. labor pool in manufacturing reduces by 10,000 retirements each day, resulting in 6,000,000 openings every month (Sumrak, 2018) and in Alabama, there are over 50,000 employees over 55 years of age in the manufacturing industry. For Alabama to attract and retain a major manufacturing presence, our industries need trained applicants with leadership potential. This is where the necessary assimilation of leadership characteristics blended with basic technology training becomes a priority in adult education.

INTRODUCTION

As part of workforce development, Calhoun Community College in Alabama consulted the manufacturing industries that are prevalent in our area to determine the appropriate direction of our adult education course offerings. The insight given by industry leaders has enabled us to offer solutions to address their workforce deficiencies; for example, low reading and math skills, soft skills, and a lack of general knowledge of the manufacturing industry (Wolfe, D. personal communication, March 11, 2019). The need to adjust our presentation of adult education curriculum into a program that prepares students for a pathway for success is a focus in our classrooms (Gerstein & Friedman, 2016; Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015). An invitation (Appendix A), interview question (Appendix B), and informed consent (Appendix C) to contribute an example of curriculum and contextual blending were sent to 10 adult education instructors with one question: How do you facilitate leadership skills in your classroom? Five instructors responded with some interesting and effective presentation techniques that promote the building of necessary leadership and social interaction skills. The activities and interactions offered in the classroom setting increase the participant's interest and

confidence in the necessary knowledge for success, contextualizing the curriculum (Kuron et al., 2015). With contextual blending, the participant can experience real-world situations in an environment of knowledge sharing.

BLENDING THE CURRICULUM

By blending workforce readiness courses, Ready To Work (RTW) and WorkKeys for a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), with the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), the students graduate with the training expected by the manufacturing industry. The manufacturing certification course provides instruction useful for in-demand career pathways, and the classes are conducted with exercises for building leadership skills, with the instructor facilitating student-led presentations. By the end of the course, students have conquered the unfamiliarity of leadership, and recognize opportunities to lead. The effective integration of leadership theory into practice in the classroom is evident in the rise of retention and participation. Enthusiasm and dedication to the completion of the program increased significantly, with several graduates interested in giving back to the program as instructors or mentors. Leading involves discernment to determine motivation, and always involves open and honest communication. Students want to trust what we say, with the most recent generation of adult learners skeptical of authority; only trusting with proof of worthiness. The leadership needed today is authentic, transparent, empathetic, and in service to others.

BACKGROUND

One year ago, I began a new journey, one that required my conversion from training employees in a retail environment to instructing adult learners in a classroom in the soft skills needed for employment. After 25 years in the retail industry, I had developed a training platform that successfully guided new hires to become valuable team members with a sense of what leadership meant and their responsibility to share knowledge. I have observed the motivation behind the behavior of employees and their expectations of leaders, and there has been a shift in both areas, behavior and expectations, due to generational and environmental influence. I transferred my retail environment training platform to the classroom and brought the theory of servant leadership into practice in adult learning classes for the manufacturing industry. Servant leadership is the underlying principle of leading a classroom of adult learners because it has the aspects of authenticity, transparency, empowerment, and empathy.

CONCEPT

The goal of adult education is the concept of recognizing the needs of the learner and serving them in the capacity of the principles of sharing knowledge to enable their success. Robert Greenleaf defined servant leadership as putting others' needs in front of personal ambition (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf believed a true leader has the insight and compassion to facilitate learning in others by communicating the willingness to help them reach personal goals. This behavior translates to guiding students on their chosen paths with authentic leadership, empathy, and empowerment. As a servant leader strives to impart the knowledge of leading others by serving their needs, the behavior of the follower changes from being served to serving others. The misconception of leadership being equal to management remains a struggle to be understood. Many consider the terms interchangeable, but the defining aspect is that everyone is and can be a leader, as Drew Dudley (2013) points out in his TED talk "Everyday Leadership." Not every leader has the skills for, or wants the responsibility of, management.

A blend of manager and leader results in a rare breed of professionals, and this balance of responsibility

to organizational goals and employee relationships results in sustainability. This aspect of sustainability should be a goal in every adult learning experience as we manage the flow of information and lead the students in their pursuit of knowledge. The changes in the expectation of leadership by employees can be tracked by the involvement of industrial organizations. The challenge for management 100 years ago was increasing profit by streamlining production, and leadership was synonymous with management. Following the guidelines of Frederick Taylor, the “father of the scientific method of management,” businesses flourished, and Taylorism became the basis for matching job descriptions to qualified applicants (Palla & Billy, 2018). From that point, the field of management has adapted to every change necessary for market survival, including the education of its workforce. In the past, the responsibility of preparing the workforce for job performance fell to the industry, and skills were obtained through on-the-job training specific to the organization, creating a workforce with few or no transferable skills. Individuals would remain with the same company from high school to retirement, content with a feeling of accomplishment—but sometimes at the expense of unfulfilled personal dreams. Adult education provides the opportunity to explore and prepare for the options of career pathways. The basic skills obtained through our programs are transferable and not necessarily limited to a single industry.

ASSIMILATION

With each generation, workers exhibit expectations, motivations, and dreams reflective of society’s disposition of their era and the environmental factors (depression, recession, war, family obligations) that influence the individual’s employment choices. Societal expectations in the early and mid-20th century were the stability of income and mutual dependency of organization and employee. An employee who worked under an authoritarian leadership style, a style that was expected for the era, was a “tool of the trade” and the first “expense” to be eliminated, while social structure disintegrated for the sake of industrial progress (Moyer, 1962). Not much was done to prepare the workforce beyond high school, with the exception of professionals like doctors, lawyers, or teachers, until the post-WWII GI Bill, so the term “job satisfaction” did not exist (unless it meant “satisfied to have a job”). As the need for the workforce to adapt to the industry changes, management has realized that the seasoned veterans of organizational change leadership are retiring, and the comradery is leaving with them, prompting the call for replacements with soft skills that, for some, unfortunately, come only with maturity.

The field of post-secondary education strives to provide the knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce as it is today. What we in adult education have learned from the input from the organizations is that the latest generation of workers lacks the skills that enable them to lead. The task is to teach the learner how to recognize the opportunities to lead. The main areas of consideration in an adult learning environment are how to communicate verbally and non-verbally, solve problems, and ask “how can I help?” when students see an opportunity to mentor.

As educators, we have a responsibility to prepare our students for real-world scenarios, but first, we need to learn what the real world expects. Whatever the generational differences present in the classroom, the message is based on sharing the leadership techniques used to determine needs, goals, strengths, and concerns. We are leading a class that will enter a multigenerational workforce, so we need to stress that talents and knowledge need to be shared across the generations. The commonalities of the multigenerational participants outweigh the differences in an adult education classroom. The labor market has changed and so should our curriculum presentation.

THE CLASSROOM

Like many successful teams, adult education teachers often use brainstorming and knowledge sharing to improve the presentation of the curriculum. We align our classes with our mission, “We live to make a difference,” and our vision of providing our participants with the tools they need to succeed in a pathway to employment, self-sufficiency, and social consciousness (Wolfe, D., personal communication, July 24, 2019). The main goal of education at the adult level is the ability to transfer knowledge to aspects of employability. Employers are concerned with the basic skill level of their applicants, and the individuals that do achieve employment are reported as unable to process instructions/directions, work with others, maintain dependability, communicate with co-workers/supervisors, or respect others and the workplace. Another concern of employers is the lack of potential for promotion because of these behaviors. Succession plans and sustainability of many industries are in danger because of insufficient candidacy for promotion (Gerstein & Friedman, 2016).

THE INTERVIEWS

The five responses to the interview question, *How do you facilitate leadership skills in your classroom?* were received from GED, RTW, and MSSC instructors, who discussed personal experiences of leading a classroom by serving their students. They experience classroom successes with their approach of contextual instruction and share some techniques that facilitate leadership skills. The problem of job applicants (potentially our participants) not possessing the skills of communication, workplace behavior, and problem-solving (soft skills); reading and math competency levels to navigate the workplace (WorkKeys); and the basic skills for the chosen industry, is the focus of this article.

1. Ms. R facilitates a student-led class of young people needing remediation in reading and writing to “bridge” into a degree program at a higher level. “To promote academic competence of reading and writing, there are writing prompts, exercising the student’s problem-solving skills and increasing self-efficacy,” stated Ms. R. “I will put a prompt on the board and using teamwork the students will brainstorm the best approach to reach a consensus” commented Ms. R. These are skills that are highly sought by employers in all industries and seriously lacking in applicants. The basic skills of communication increase in subsequent education forums and in the workforce, where communication is a component of job retention. Working on a common goal also builds leadership skills through supporting one another’s ideas and encouraging input from teammates.
2. The bonus of this team-building exercise is ultimately creating group efficacy, as they find problem-solving skills when working together. As Miss M. added, “When throwing ideas around, they get comfortable speaking up” and “as a group they begin to encourage one another in their journey, celebrating successes and building up one another.” The idea of encouraging leadership is a natural outcome of facilitating an adult education class. Miss M. encourages mentorship in the classroom, supporting the importance of knowledge sharing and leading with purpose. She recommends “having the advanced students work with lower-level skilled students.” This provides a dual opportunity for learning. The advanced student learns how to teach and train, while the mentee receives tutoring and gains self-confidence.

Strong leadership comes from developing an attitude of humility. Sharing your strengths to bolster another’s weaknesses, encouraging the meek to believe in themselves, and being willing to learn from others are the antecedents of great leadership. The RTW program has many hidden opportunities to promote successful leadership; many participants do not realize they are leading others and influencing

success. A program strongly based in the realm of career pathway introduction, the RTW curriculum instructors encourage the development of skills that improve employability. Three of the RTW components, Communications, Workplace Behavior, and Problem-Solving, have commonalities to the MSSC curriculum and benefit the students that have chosen the manufacturing industry as a career pathway. The RTW students that are searching for their path are provided with the soft skills needed for employability, but, as a bonus, get technical skills found in the FDIC and Technology Basic components. The goal of the RTW instructor aligns with the vision of adult education. We want every person who seeks our help to better their lives to be given the opportunity to become a self-sufficient, employed, and contributing part of society.

3. RTW instructor Mr. R. added his approach to facilitating leadership skills in a description of critical thinking as an exercise in communication. Although critical thinking is often considered an inward analysis of one's perception and whether that perception is egocentric, Mr. R. uses the same approach when he "opens a dialogue amongst the students and encourages them to challenge and defend their positions." The debate format of his class promotes problem-solving skills and increases self- and group-efficacy. When the class arrives at consensus, they gain the skills needed to lead a team.
4. Ms. B. shares her knowledge of real-world requirements of employability in every class by encouraging her students to pursue their dreams. She takes the time to find their motivation and streamlines their paths to include the information specific to their situation. Ms. B. shared the following story. "I have a student that is a remarkable seamstress and expressed the desire to share her knowledge with others by teaching a sewing class. Her assignment for the Technology Basic component was to create a flyer for her 'class'. I surprised the student when I saw the completed and wonderfully done flyer by placing the flyer on the student information board outside the classroom." By serving her student encouragement, empowerment, and knowledge, Ms. B exposed the student's leadership skills and built a real-world situation to relate.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the MSSC curriculum facilitated by the adult education instructor is a compilation of the basic knowledge and skills needed to increase employability in the manufacturing industry. The completion of each MSSC module results in a "stand-alone" certificate that diversifies the pathways of possible careers. The first module, Safety, blends effectively with the RTW soft skills, providing the participant with a multiview of industry applications. Leadership skills are a necessary skill in manufacturing for every employee to be aware of their environment and conscious of their responsibility to one another. The MSSC classroom is a constant mix of acquired knowledge and the immediate application of the knowledge, requiring the exercise of the leadership skills of encouragement, empowerment, authenticity, and serving others. I am an MSSC Instructor, and my fellow instructor shares my philosophy.

5. In Ms. V.'s class, you can expect to be challenged to share what you have learned. Help when you see someone needs help. Talk when you have something to say. She promotes leadership skills by "encouraging the students to focus on moving toward a goal together as a team and the momentum will be unstoppable. Also, each one of them possesses different skills. Some are stronger in some areas of leadership than others. I tell them to take what they have, build on it, and lead your place of employment into a safe and successful workplace."

CONCLUSION

I realized while writing this article that we all have the potential of leadership, just as Drew Dudley pointed out in his TED talk, but my question is whether you are a leader that sparks a desire to emulate. Do you overhear your students repeating your words of encouragement to a fellow classmate? Miss M. shared

in her interview: “Continually remind them of how far they have come, and you will soon hear them telling others the same thing in times of discouragement.” We should all aspire to the level of emulation. Leading our students by serving them with encouragement, empathy, empowerment, and knowledge-sharing will instill the recognition of an opportunity to help others to find their inner leader. ✂

Phyllis J. Atwood is currently employed with Calhoun Community College in the Adult Education Department. Her appointment as a Program Coordinator is rewarding with the opportunity to help adults find a new career or update credentials for promotion. There are great opportunities for her to counsel and encourage those entering, re-entering, or wanting to advance in the workforce by building on their strengths and helping them gain new skills.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Governor Kay Ivey: <https://governor.alabama.gov/>
- Alabama Ready to Work: <https://alabamareadytowork.org/>
- Manufacturing Skill Standards Council: <https://www.msscusa.org/>

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO INTERVIEW

I am submitting an article to COABE about how we, the Alabama Community College System, have been tasked with preparing individuals with the basic academic, soft skills, leadership skills, and technical knowledge needed for the industries in the state of Alabama. I included a segment on how the needs of the industries and generational differences have influenced how we present curriculum in the classroom to promote leadership skills (role-playing, student-led presentation of material, etc.). I would like to include your thoughts and experience in the article and although I have talked at length with each of you at some time in the last year, I would like to interview you.

I realize that some of you are GED, Bridge, etc. and not directly involved in the topic of the article, but I value your insight. Calhoun Community College Adult Education teachers are tasked with leading our classrooms with a connection between the coursework and real-world expectations. We facilitate the classroom activities so the participants can experience and practice skills that are necessary for job placement and retention.

As with any research, anonymity is provided, unless you give me permission (See attached Informed Consent Memo). There is only one question to this interview, so it will not take long, and you can respond by return e-mail (See attached Interview Question Memo) I need your response by Tuesday, June 24, 2019, so I can finish the article, and submit. I will send you a copy before I submit, for feedback or clarification on Wednesday. I do apologize for the short notice, the deadline snuck up on me, so I will be finalizing the article for submission on Friday. Please print out the release forms, sign them, and put them in an envelope, and put them in my mailbox. I will collect them from Decatur/Huntsville.

Hope you can help,

Phyllis

APPENDIX B: NECESSARY ASSIMILATION OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR THE ADULT LEARNER

Interview Question

Employers are concerned with the basic skill level of their applicants. The hiring managers are strained to identify qualified candidates to interview. The individuals that do achieve employment are reported as unable to: process instructions/directions, work with others, maintain dependability, communicate with co-workers/supervisory, respect others or workplace. The biggest concern is the lack of potential for promotion because of these behaviors.

My question to you is:

RQ. How do you facilitate leadership skills in your classroom?

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT**TITLE OF STUDY**

_Necessary Assimilation of Leadership Skills for the Adult Learner

PRIMARY RESEARCHER

Name - _Phyllis Atwood

Department - _Adult Education

Address –

Phone –

Email - _phyllis.atwood@calhoun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY _The purpose of this study was to collect insight from experienced teachers to the methods employed to transfer the knowledge of how to lead, and how to share knowledge. _____

PROCEDURES I used purposive selection of seven instructors in the Adult Education Department of Calhoun Community College. I sent an invitation to interview, informed consent memo, and one research question to solicit a narrative response.

RISKS None **BENEFITS** At the most, the benefit of the results if published is an impact on other instructors as they navigate the new requirements of basic skills for employment. At the least, this research will be shared campus-wide to share classroom skills and community goals. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Please do not write any identifying information.

Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents

Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

CONTACT INFORMATION If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Researcher directly by telephone at _____ or at the following email address __phyllis.atwood@calhoun.edu_.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Note: Please delineate the “Consent” section of the Informed Consent Form by drawing a line across the page (like this - Example). This delineation is important because the consent form grammar shifts from second person to first person, as shown in the example.

CONSENT I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant’s Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher’s Signature _____ Date _____

TRANSFORMATIVE PARENT LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Jeri Levesque, Ed.D.

Center of Effort, LLC

Lynn McGregor

National Center for Families Learning

Author Note: This program is supported in part by a grant from United Way for Southeastern Michigan (www.liveunitedsem.org) and is a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) program (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund>). The Family Service Learning component was sponsored by Toyota as a component of its Toyota Family Learning initiative with the National Center for Families Learning.

ABSTRACT

Parents who participate in family literacy and family learning programs gain new skills and knowledge through Family Service Learning projects. They increase their social capital and self-efficacy, especially developing leadership and advocacy skills, when they focus on issues of concern and relevance on behalf of themselves and their children. A group of parents participating in a family literacy program in one of four schools in Detroit, Michigan, led by a parent, initiated an anti-bullying campaign in their children's school. Through a series of family service action steps, the parents successfully engaged the school and community to address bullying and sustain anti-bullying practices with students, teachers, school administration, and family members.

WE ARE SICK OF BULLIES!

After several upsetting bullying incidents at her children's school, Maria, a mother of two young children and an immigrant from Mexico, knew she had to do something. Maria also knew where to find the support she needed to put an end to the problem. As part of an innovative family literacy program in Detroit, Maria had become confident about her English language and literacy skills and had met her personal learning goals. She welcomed situations that led her to act as an advocate for all children by securing a safer school climate. Maria spearheaded a Family Service Learning project (Cramer & Toso, 2015) that focused on bullied students as well as those who saw the incidents and were impacted by an increasingly disruptive learning environment.

Fast forward a few weeks to when Maria excitedly phoned the manager of her family literacy program. She had just presented the class's Family Service Learning project proposal for an anti-bullying campaign to the school's Title I family engagement committee. Their plan included an explanation of why bullying hurts all students, not only those bullied, and how bad feelings hinder children's ability to concentrate and learn. She emphasized the point that prolonged, unmitigated bullying becomes toxic stress that harms children's development and threatens their future success.

Not content to simply complain about the problem, Maria offered a clear plan of action for students, teachers, and family members that included presentations by social service workers, a poster campaign, and a

school play. She also introduced a policy statement that outlined steps to stop all forms of student intimidation and inappropriate social behaviors.

“We did it!” Maria exclaimed to the program manager, “They loved our ideas and approved our anti-bullying plan! We are going to start right away!”

Maria immediately text messaged the good news to the 22 Hispanic families in her Family Learning community—they were ready to make changes in the school that would build healthy peer relationships.

FAMILY LITERACY—PATHWAYS TO A HEALTHY SCHOOL CLIMATE

The goal of Maria’s family literacy program is to break the cycle of intergenerational educational failure and poverty by building family well-being through an educational intervention. Family literacy programs emphasize parents’ roles as learners as well as supporters of their children’s education (Jacobs, Cramer, Noles, & Lovett, 2019). Adults forge strong home-school partnerships by engaging in experiential learning, skill building, and the study of common problems in search of innovative solutions. Adult educators and key family service staff offer training that centers on parents’ needs, perceptions, and culture related to supporting and advocating for their children’s educational progress. School-based family literacy programs, like Maria’s, demonstrate positive outcomes that resonate with Henderson & Mapp’s (2002) assertion that children from diverse cultural backgrounds perform better when their parents and educators collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and at the learning institution.

Parents like Maria across the nation are members of intensive family literacy programs built on four integrated components that stem from children’s education.¹ Parents engage in adult learning and skill building, parent education, and interactive learning activities within their children’s classrooms. Family literacy programs are for “families most in need, over a period of time, with consistency and intensity of services” (Jacobs, Cramer, Noles, & Lovett, 2019, p.1).

Successful family literacy programs are grounded by a mutual understanding and shared responsibility for ensuring high expectations for adults and their children—this structure provides a dual-generation intervention. On one hand, parents expect teachers to recognize their children as unique learners and attend to their social and emotional learning needs while also providing high-quality instruction. Teachers, in turn, expect families to promote their children’s character development during out-of-school time.

ENGAGE TO CREATE CHANGE

Transformative leadership directs adults to focus on inequities that are generational and correlated with a group’s demographics (Lindsey, Kearney, Estrada, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2015). Parents in family literacy programs are profoundly engaged with their children, with their schools, and with their communities. They begin the program year by identifying their own personal (e.g., job readiness) and learning (e.g., high school equivalency) goals. Program staff and parents work together and determine systematic ways to approach these goals and monitor progress. Goal-centered engagement leads parents through future-focused systemic transformational change that impacts their entire family. Over the course of the school year, parents develop literacy skills and English proficiency as well as soft skills sought by employers. Stronger home-to-school relationships develop over time and enhance parents’ views about the critical role they play as their children’s first teachers. Maria’s program focuses on parents who want to learn English to gain employment and/or who believe that by

¹ The family literacy program described in this article was designed by the National Center for Families Learning.

being in a school-based program they will learn how to best support their children as learners. For example, the Hispanic adults in Maria's class concentrate on their own English learning to reinforce their children's education and to gain employment that will ensure their family's economic security.

Prior to joining the family literacy program, Maria, an English language learner, had never imagined herself speaking before a group of teachers and the principal. The program staff declared that Maria was a champion. They had seen Maria's increased sense of empowerment and her willingness to be a leader for parents of students who were the victims of bullying.

Most parents in the family literacy program had little previous academic success but were willing to push past their fear of failure. For many, feelings of confidence and competence relative to school were hard to realize as only two thirds of the group went past the sixth grade in their home countries. Through full program participation, they are increasingly involved with meaningful engagement in their children's education. They are present daily in their children's schools serving as positive role models, inviting other parents to become more engaged, and volunteering throughout the building. They understand the importance of a safe and respectful school climate and parental responsibilities for supporting learning at home.

Family literacy programs focus on families' strengths rather than perceived deficits. These intensive programs build parents' ability to adapt and be open to their own potential by equipping them with the tools they need to make good decisions. Maria attends adult learning instruction, parenting classes, and participates in her child's classroom four times a week. The content of the adult learning component often connects parents with the children's reading curriculum. The parents may study idioms and grammar one day and practice reading fluency the next. They learn that their own literacy development, progress toward family goals, and intense involvement in school-based programming are catalysts that accelerate their children's success.

Through Parent Time, parents identify topics of interest that align with their goals and help connect them with community resources during their classes. These interactions expand families' social capital and self-efficacy. Session topics may include work-life balance, housing, community safety, and the fraying fabric of the social safety net.²

Parents and Children Together (PACT) Time® may take place in classrooms, at home, or in the community when families work, play, and learn together in a supported way. This strengths-based approach enables families to become radically proactive—they seize new possibilities, foster resiliency among two generations, and make unique connections across schools, homes, and the community.

When parents are mindful of the power they wield by focusing on the time they share with their children, they realize how much their actions and words shape their children's development. Family literacy programs provide parents regular opportunities to co-learn with their children. They build rapport with teachers and better understand their children's interests and learning styles. Many mothers who are immigrants report PACT Time increases their understanding about the way American schools work.

During post-PACT Time debriefings, parents brainstorm how they can creatively apply strategies, new concepts, and vocabulary and practice activities at home. Parents' reflections about PACT Time affirm that

² According to Wikipedia, "the social safety net is a collection of services provided by state or other institutions such as friendly societies, including welfare, unemployment benefit, universal healthcare... homeless shelters, and sometimes subsidized services such as public transport, which prevent individuals from falling into poverty beyond a certain level." (Retrieved August 18, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_safety_net). Programs within the safety net, in combinations, are intended to improve intergenerational economic mobility and to give children born into poverty a better shot at a better life.

“...sustained participation positively impacts parental involvement in schools, the extension of learning from school to the home, and children’s overall academic achievement” (Levesque, 2013).

LEARN—SERVE—LEARN MORE

Family Service Learning weaves together the four family literacy program components, so adults and their children—together—practice new skills in the real world (Cramer & Toso, 2015). Service learning has its origins in transformative learning theories that explain adults’ world views and describe how they develop and use critical self-reflection to consider their beliefs and experiences—and over time, change (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Transformative learning happens when adults share opportunities for critical thinking while they learn and undertake work that stimulates novel ideas and actions.

Family Service Learning involves a six-step process created to promote adult skill building and parenting components. Participants start to see the world through a different lens when they look at the causes and impacts of problems and analyze the feasibility of solutions. Their worldviews change as they work together to identify and prioritize problems and then to explore the root causes of these issues. Transformational leadership skills, seeded through the intensive service learning process, build a base of informed and active parents. They perceive themselves as catalysts for change rather than passive bystanders.

The initial investigative step may involve research on the internet, conversations with other community members, and community mapping to discern the root causes of key issues. For example, one project stemmed from learning that one of the mothers at the program’s elementary school lacked warm clothing and was unbearably cold during her breast cancer treatment. The group set out to make blankets with their children. Parents gifted their creations to patients at a cancer clinic. Along the way the women learned about breast cancer risks, detection, and treatment options and reminded each other to do monthly self-exams.

Next, parents collectively decide upon a reasonable solution. The parents often discover intergenerational injustice and recognize oppressive systems that deny equity and opportunity. Parents act as leaders when exercising their voice and discovering there are people who will listen and support their solutions. They practice key employability skills such as project organization, time management, collaboration, and follow-through. Generally, these are not one-time events but engage families over weeks and months. The steps include time for a shared reflection about project highlights, barriers to success, and new insights. The process culminates with a family celebration, sharing of results, and consideration of “next steps” to ensure sustainable solutions and replication of social innovations. The overall impact is a stronger capacity for family-school partnerships that engage and promote the community.

The focus of Maria’s Family Service Learning project is timely. Threats to safe learning environments that promote social-emotional learning include bullying, hazing, and student intimidation. These threats negatively impact more than one out of every five students in the nation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Numerous bullying incidents at school became a major concern as more and more parents realized their children’s mental and physical health were threatened. But, from their vantage point, they felt ill-equipped to solve the problem. Through the investigation step, they learned bullying not only harms the student who is the object of the abuse but also the bully and everyone who witnesses the incident. Parents shared painful experiences where their children complained of stomach pain and headaches and didn’t want to go to school anymore. The situation was growing more toxic and the district bullying policy seemed inadequate to resolve the problem.

Parents changed their focus for finding a solution from the district to the community, where they

discovered local programs for families and educators to address bullying. Community experts visited and shared information during Parent Time. Parents learned that bullying can happen anywhere: school hallways, lockers, bathrooms, and even in the classroom. Fortified with new awareness, the parents crafted an anti-bullying campaign. They reached out to other parents and shared newly found guidance for handling conflict and promoting social-emotional development for all students. Their campaign started with awareness of what bullying *is*. They encouraged everyone to talk with their children about bullying privately at home and confidentially through school connections. They offered parents candid advice about what to do at home if their child was a victim or perpetrator of bullying.

As Maria, her classmates, and their families implemented their anti-bullying campaign, they practiced communication, technology skills, resource management, and information use. They bounced ideas among the class members and acted on their new perspectives about what a healthy school climate should include. Through this experiential learning process, parents tackled issues outside of their comfort zone, such as how does one deal with a parent whose child—allegedly—physically hurt their own child? This and other dilemmas associated with confronting conflict spurred critical thinking and deep reflection. Their perceptions about self-confidence, efficacy, and competencies changed as they sensed that “being smart” is not static or carved in stone. They felt they were “growing smarter” by learning new things and practicing skills associated with learning (Dweck, 2006, 2015).

With a better understanding of bullying, its consequences, and strategies for dealing with harassment, parents put together a plan to raise awareness and to reduce bullying in their school. They introduced new strategies to other parents from information gathered during the community investigation. Social workers came to school to talk with children about bullying. Maria’s class wrote a play during adult skill building and then directed the performance—featuring students—for a schoolwide audience.

Parent organizers leading the bullying campaign created a student contest to design simple mottos, catchy slogans, and artwork. Posters and buttons displayed the contest’s top-rated entries. This visual media aspect of the project enhanced students’ awareness and ownership of problems and solutions associated with bullying. Bullying became a schoolwide topic of conversation. As the school community became more aware, greater numbers of students and families were willing to tackle behavioral issues, and incidences of bullying were less frequent.

As full partners with their children’s educators, Maria’s class helped more parents find their voices and assume their roles as supporters and advocates of a healthy social-emotional learning community. Because of the project’s effectiveness, the principal declared that every year an anti-bullying school event would take place. The principal also endorsed the committee’s anti-bullying policy recommendation, which she forwarded to the school board for consideration. It was clear the parent-driven actions were more effective than any printed directives.

TRANSFORMATIVE PARENT ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

Issues such as bullying involve the entire school community. Deep issues that threaten or enhance students’ social-emotional learning require adults to get involved and take appropriate action (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2009). One way to initiate proactive solutions is to engage parents in Family Service Learning. It is a strategic process of inventing new solutions to old problems. Working together, parents sense that rather than learning through formal classes, they are creating their own new skills and knowledge from purposeful everyday living. Family Service Learning is a transformative strategy that builds self-efficacy and a willingness to explore new roles and relationships (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). From a

transformative view of adult learning, family learning is meaningful and transformative when it:

- is driven by what parents want to learn,
- provides opportunities for parents to practice skills they want to develop (rather than being limited to academic content alone),
- is pragmatic and progressive, and
- is grounded by the tenets of service learning.

Family Service Learning is a holistic strategy that expands the social networks connecting families more deeply and positively with their schools and communities.

Parents in Maria's family literacy program transformed their capacity for strong and sustainable school engagement. They protect the core value of education—that all students deserve an excellent education in safe schools—by assuming the role of leaders. Their actions reflect a fresh perspective about transformative leadership and its impact on relationships between parents and teachers, teachers and students, and parents and their children. They believe positive relationships involve sharing feelings, expressing concerns, and acting on what parents *know* and can *do*. Through Family Service Learning, they transform their sense of belonging and pride in their school and their community. Parents, administrators, and teachers work side-by-side in parent-led projects. Parents exercise their deep sense of commitment and passion to correct a toxic situation rather than choosing to enroll their children in a different school. Their anti-bullying campaign was instrumental in moving a school from an ineffective district policy toward organic solutions that will safeguard a nurturing learning environment for all students. ☘

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PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIONS

ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN CREATE EXTRAORDINARY OUTCOMES THROUGH COLLABORATION

Pat Thomas

Southwest Adult Basic Education

ABSTRACT

Collaboration is a practice that many providers say they are doing but rarely do we see it translated into the actual work that staff connected with our learners—our customers—do. Our customers face multiple barriers in their desire to succeed and move forward. Leadership with a focus on creating partnerships to address the multiple barriers of these customers is critical. Leadership with a focus on collaboration must be done with intentionality, for it is hard work. We must proceed recognizing that trust among partners is essential, and we must give up individual control of the final product created. This paper examines important lessons learned through many collaborations among a rural program, Southwest Adult Basic Education (SW ABE), workforce partners, Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), and additional agencies and offers concrete examples of successful results.

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration is a practice we all say we are doing, but I have found that very seldom do we see it within our adult education programs. I speak about collaboration looking back on a 20-year career of being a director of an adult education program in southwestern Minnesota, Southwest Adult Basic Education (SW ABE). As I look back over my career, I believe ordinary people can do extraordinary things through true collaboration. That is precisely what we are: ordinary people with a new way to do business that benefits our common customer.

First, I believe it is vital to understand our geography, the demographics of our area, the industries in our area, and the challenges we experience. Our population in southwestern Minnesota has low density, and the population has been declining. Our region, made up of 22 counties, covers approximately 25% of the state. The area has two regional centers, which each have a population of 12,000-13,000. Our primary industry sectors are agriculture, healthcare, food processing, government, and transportation. We have very low unemployment with a skilled workforce shortage, a common problem in many places. Our employers struggle to find adequate staffing to operate. Our growth has primarily come from immigrant and refugee populations, and these populations tend to have low literacy. Since we have this large geographic area, there is a distance

between communities, and we struggle with a lack of public transportation and limited childcare providers. Resources allotted to our ABE, workforce, public schools, and colleges have been reduced.

Clearly, all of these factors would seem to create an environment where providing adequate services to our customers would be very difficult, but in reality, I would suggest these factors have been blessings that have provided the perfect environment to lead through collaboration. I would also suggest that all of our service providers and employers would confidently state that nobody has the capacity to operate as a silo or an island. None of us can succeed without the collaborative effort put forward in our area to address challenges. Together we have created some amazing partnerships and service delivery products that help make all of us successful.

An excellent example of a fruitful partnership began when the state ABE office offered grants to provide career services to ABE students. SW ABE, rather than trying to develop career services for its students, turned to our workforce partner to provide these services because our workforce partner is an expert in this field. As a result of this partnership, workforce personnel still came to ABE classes to provide their services to ABE students after the grant period ended.

So why do I say our area was blessed to face the challenge of how to overcome diminishing resources and what some might consider major obstacles? I would suggest that few organizations, by choice, look to create partnerships to address needs if there is a chance they have sufficient resources to meet the need by themselves. We do not want to give up control of the end product. True collaboration will never be successful until we each focus on our areas of expertise. Our customers do not, and should not have to, know where the resources are coming from that help them to move forward. An effective model of collaboration is one where resources flow from different agencies into one in a manner that appears seamless to the customer. Agencies need to put aside a desire to gain recognition and place a collaborative focus on the success of the customer. As Regional Workforce Development Director Carrie Bendix states, “By combining our resources toward a common goal, we are able to serve more individuals and create a more significant change throughout this region” (personal communication, May 28, 2019).

What are those resources and factors that have made successful collaboration a reality for SW ABE? Most importantly, we fully recognize that agencies do not work with other agencies, but rather staff from agencies work with staff from other agencies. Leaders of agencies need to support collaboration by all means, but they have to allow those staff in the trenches to use their experience to determine together how to make the collaboration work. Over my career, I have seen the state ABE office in Minnesota lay out three-year initiatives to seek partnerships with workforce, our college systems, and our employers. These initiatives have created beautiful examples of collaborative efforts on paper, but I find that they seldom translate to the level of staff working directly with the customer. I certainly believe these initiatives have value, but when the outcome is a collaborative effort on paper rather than actual practices resulting from the effort, we fall short of the intended outcome.

PUSHING COLLABORATION BEYOND AN EFFORT ON PAPER

A year and a half ago, ABE personnel began a conversation with our Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) technology staff to explore the possibility of delivering ABE services to students via technology. SMSU staff who shared this vision wrote and received a grant to provide 300 Adobe Connect web conferencing licenses to SW ABE. Over this past year, SW ABE has offered any ABE program in Minnesota this web conferencing tool and found other grants to maintain this service through the coming year. State college staff have embraced this idea and have had discussions with state ABE personnel about how this service could be continued without grant funding. The bottom line is that we now have ABE students participating in classes through their computers or smartphones when distance or schedules do not allow attendance at the physical site. In the words of SMSU President Connie Gores, “SMSU is delighted to partner with SW ABE to

provide these opportunities for individuals and to create pathways for advancing through education. We will continue to partner with ABE as we explore how to continue providing these services in the future” (personal communication, May 28, 2019) (See Appendix A for additional information).

We fully recognize that our attitude will either make or break any real differences we can make in the lives of our customers. Our attitude needs to be positive and can-do to be successful. Judy Mortrude, Senior Technical Advisor at World Education International, adds that to be successful, “Collaborative leadership also requires a level of vulnerability and trust” (personal communication, May 17, 2019). The collaborative attitude requires us to start at square one, not knowing what the end product will look like, but still moving forward with all partners shaping that end product—again giving up that control and accepting the fact that there are no failures in our efforts, only opportunities to learn how to do things better the next time. Luck will always come second to persistent, positive effort in a timely fashion. If we had allowed an “Oops!” in our efforts to hamper our ability to work together instead of learning from our missteps, we would have never ended up successfully meeting our customers’ needs. Here again, effective collaboration requires giving up control and the need to blame others for a product that was less than successful. Each “Oops!” has made us stronger rather than diminishing our product, as echoed by Carrie Bendix: “A commitment to stick it out together, to problem solve, to admit when wrong, to understand the other’s needs is all needed to grow stronger” (personal communication, May 28, 2019).

By now, we fully acknowledge that we will not be successful unless we practice true collaboration and not paper compliance. Our partners invest in a common focus and a common customer; moreover, we all invest in the success of our partner agencies as much as our own agency. To do this, everyone at the table needs to be aware of the resources and skills that can be brought to the effort. Is a partner a concrete or random thinker? How does a partner take in information and give it out? Is a partner an idea person, or does he or she excel at making things happen? Partners need to be aware of their own skillsets plus the skills other partners bring to the table. I would suggest that if a business model does not change in some way through a collaborative effort, something is very wrong. I would also suggest that although all partners need to be supportive of this collaboration/new way of doing business, there needs to be one person or agency who is the “spark plug” for the effort. This “spark plug” provides the encouragement to help move the group toward greater innovation. In our collaborations, this role was often filled by the ABE program, possibly due to the fact that ABE often has less bureaucracy within its structure and has more freedom to try ideas.

An additional example I can provide that showcases what true collaboration looks like is our Adult/Youth Career Training. Before 2014, SW ABE, workforce, and our technical college had been relatively successful in providing Certified Nursing Assistant and welding classes to adults throughout our area, yet classes would often not fill to capacity. In 2014, Marshall Public Schools, together with SW ABE, workforce, and the technical college, began offering these classes to a combination of high school youth and adults to ensure cost per student could be kept at a lower rate. These classes have continued with an important realization that mixing the two populations and creating an environment where they can gain from each other has benefited both populations far beyond the original cost savings goal. The icing on the cake came in 2017 when our high school cooperative received a grant from the state legislature for \$3 million to embed career training into local high schools. The cooperative has promoted this adult/youth training model to our entire area under the name Launch Your Future Today (LYFT); (See Appendix B for additional information).

Scott Monson, Superintendent of Marshall Public Schools shares, “Successful programs begin with collaboration and partnerships. This is especially true in education. Because of our collaborative leadership, we have been able to combine programs that may have been running independently, allowing us to offer greater opportunities for students and employers in the region” (personal communication, May 22, 2019). We recognize that success comes from being customer-focused. Therefore, this leads to the question: *Who is your customer?* Is your customer your agency’s goals, your supervisor, or the person receiving your service?

I believe that to be successful in true collaboration, all must center their attention on that person utilizing the services. Our agencies cannot help but reap benefits to our own missions if we together can make these individuals successful.

As evidence of the success of our workforce, ABE, and technical college partnership, I requested information about the number of individuals served through this collaboration. The college provided the following numbers, submitted in their Carl Perkins report during the time period of 2006-2018. (These numbers reflect only adults served, and not all classes ran each year.) The total number served was over 1,200 adults in various classes in healthcare, community interpreter, welding, Commercial Drivers' License, and electrical controls. Of this number, over half were students of color, 21% had limited English proficiency, 46% were receiving some type of public assistance, 13% had disabilities, and 5% were ex-offenders.

To further illustrate the importance of understanding each collaborative partner's skillset, I offer an example that involves an adult welding student in our program. Our classes are held at the local public school, and background checks are done on each adult. The particular student's background check came back to the high school principal with outstanding warrants in a different state. All partners recognized that this issue needed to be quickly addressed, and partners came together within two hours to meet. The workforce staff, who hold the grant for the welding class, wanted to lead the meeting by asking the student if he knew why the group was meeting. The high school principal, who has had extensive experience with high school students and the law, suggested a different approach of laying out the problem and asking how we could support the student to deal with this issue. The decision was to use the public school staff's approach. The outcome was very successful: The student used support from our agencies to have the warrants dismissed, and the welding field gained a good employee. Because our partnership is based on our customers receiving our joint services, the partner with the greatest experience in dealing with this issue led the effort rather than the staff from the agency providing financial support.

True partnership or collaboration is hard work and must be entered into with great intentionality. SW ABE could say it was forced to enter into partnerships to be able to truly serve our customers, but I do believe that others not facing these same challenges are equally capable of replicating our outcomes. Agencies need to be willing to give up absolute control, staff from agencies need to have positive attitudes, and the customers' needs should be the focus of all efforts. Then, even ordinary people can create extraordinary outcomes together! ✂

Pat Thomas has been an innovative leader and an integral participant in many partnerships over the past 20 years as a SW ABE Director in southwestern Minnesota. These partnerships have benefited many individuals in reaching their dreams. She has lived the quote "Well-behaved women rarely make history" throughout her career.

APPENDIX A: ADOBE CONNECT COLLABORATION

To see the Adobe Connect article on the collaboration between SMSU and SW ABE, please go to http://www.smsu.edu/today/articles/2018/08-04-2018_danbaunpatthomasabegrant.html. The landing page for web conferencing services through Adobe Connect with SW ABE can be found by going to <https://www.southwestabe.org/web-conferencing>.

APPENDIX B: LYFT COLLABORATION

LYFT is a rural career and technical education (CTE) pathway initiative with the purpose of rebuilding CTE in southwest and west central Minnesota. To see more information on LYFT, please go to <https://www.lyftpathways.org/>.

LEADING THE WAY TO TEAM TEACHING AN INTEGRATED SPIRALED THEMATIC HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY COURSE

Karla Walker

Leading, to me, is about having a goal and working towards it. As a scientist, though, I know that many times we learn more from mistakes or unexpected results. Our division needed to develop new curriculum to help adults earn their High School Equivalency Diplomas (HSEDs). Our chosen expected goals were: 1) to shorten the time students took to complete the program, 2) develop transition to college or employment, 3) allow for poverty-informed decisions within the program, 4) develop cohorts, and 5) integrate the use of technology. The unexpected achievements we encountered were: 1) the effects of team teaching the curriculum, 2) the reduction of academic anxiety, 3) the acknowledgement of accomplishment, and the 4) importance and difficulty of developing time management skills. Here is our story.

WHY THIS COURSE THIS WAY?

We set our goals for this course in alignment with the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) shifts of *complexity, evidence, and knowledge* for English Language Arts/Literacy and *focus, coherence, and rigor* for Math. The English Language Arts shifts in the Wisconsin Adult Basic Education state curriculum were to combine reading, writing, and communication instead of maintaining curriculum standards for each category. The shifts highlighted spiraling and integrating curriculum around themes. These themes were bound to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). It challenged the state to combine resources and create partnerships, look to labor market data and industry research to determine which skills the workforce needs, and focus on the creation of a workforce that can meet the expectations of the future economy.

Our dean and associate dean took all these initiatives into consideration, put forth their goals for a revision of this program, and provided time and space for its development. They then chose experienced teachers they respected who had worked at the state level on the revision of the state competencies aligned to CCRS. The main concepts of integration, themes, coherence, rigor, complexity, and workforce needs all came together into thematic integrated units that cover all the competencies of seven courses and promote pathways to work or college.

CHANGING THE PROGRAM

The revision was from a 30-year-old program that had students working on individual siloed curriculum at their own pace. Some students had been in the program for over 10 years.

Although we were still very committed to shortening the time it took to get an HSED, after the first semester of implementation, we determined that requiring a second semester of instruction with an addition of individual pathway pursuit was necessary to achieve our second goal of transition to college. There just wasn't enough time in one semester to accomplish all the material. The employability course was removed from the content course because the curriculum could be expanded to provide more depth on writing and

computer skills while focusing on the individuals' transition goals, which aligned better with the WIOA goals. In this course, called Transition, students write resumes and cover letters, build a personal webpage for branding, and maximize the employability skills they have. They also have an option to obtain Credits for Prior Learning (CPL). These credits are from their own work or life experience that translate into a course offered at Western Technical College.

During the second semester we also required each student take a graded course of their choice/ability, ideally in preparation for a program they are interested in entering. We do not have enough students to provide multiple-pathway instruction to our HSED students, but by compelling them to take a college course before high school graduation, we put students on an individual pathway by design. It also compels students to apply to go to college, fill out financial aid and scholarship forms, and participate in college/career counseling. Therefore, our HSED students transition into college students just by being in the program. By straddling the high school and college gap, students who may struggle with curriculum or college processes are supported by classmates and instructors that they have built relationships with among their cohort. This eases their transition if they decide to enter a program and allows them the opportunity to choose their path to a career.

An online version of the first-semester curriculum was built after three semesters of the course had been taught. It was initially designed for students in outreach locations or night classes at the request of the dean and associate dean. It has since become the third leg of our program. Students can take the whole first semester online, but they can also complete individual units if they have missed some from the face-to-face class. This works well for students who may have had life interrupt the two-semester program.

TEAM TEACHING THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The team decided early on that, to achieve the goal of integrating the curriculum of the seven course areas of health, social studies, communication, math, science, and computer literacy into a semester, we would need a team of two experienced teachers in the classroom throughout the class time to ensure rigor, just-in-time learning, and expediency. One teacher would have expertise in math/science and the other would have expertise in reading/writing/communication. Although research shows that team teaching is good for students, it is expensive. Our leadership committed to team teaching because it also paralleled the division's goal of reducing poverty and providing an education for the most at-risk adults in our community. The curriculum the teachers developed created as many lessons as possible that would have more than two courses reflected in their competencies. They also collaborated with expert resources throughout the college in social studies, online resource evaluations, and economics in the creation of the lessons. Links to careers and programs at the college are embedded whenever possible.

Most of the lessons/activities had to be created by the lead teachers. Some existing resources were used, like iCivics, but many of the materials are excerpts from articles ("You Can Grow Your Brain," "Surrendering" by Ocean Vuong, and "Trends in Migration to the U.S."), primary documents (the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence), or non-fiction books (*Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand, *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly, and *How Not to be Wrong* by Jordan Ellenberg). We have also used Ted Talks, and parts of the videos *Liberty*, and *America: The Story of US*. One lesson includes reading the article "You Can Grow Your Brain." It presents the research findings that by exercising your brain, you can learn throughout your life and that it is a myth that you can't get better at math. This lesson not only provides an opportunity to learn about reading skills, comprehension, and reading strategies, but also math anxiety and scientific methods. In another lesson, we have students pretend they are on a desert island together (building cohort, problem-solving, and critical thinking). They must choose 10 items from a sinking ship that might be useful to them to survive. We then

weigh (mass and weight) all the chosen items using pound and gram scales (math and science measurement skills). This sets them up to learn metric and English-to-metric conversion to get a total mass in kilograms. As a third lesson example, we read a prologue from the book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot and talk about cancer and mitosis. We include the Ted Talks "We Can Start Winning the War Against Cancer" by Adam de la Zerda and "What You Need to Know About Crispr" by Ellen Jorgenson. The lesson includes instruction in reading strategies, vocabulary and word parts, and notation skills. We also color a picture of mitosis and label the stages of that process (science concepts).

The college dean and associate dean committed to trying these innovative and expensive practices to see what would happen. It isn't that this curriculum couldn't be taught by one teacher, but, as we mentioned before, we all underestimated the value of modeling professionalism and student skills to the students that team teaching provides. When one instructor was leading an activity, the other teacher acted like an excellent student: asking questions, excited about learning, taking notes, and modeling how to get the most out of an education. This alternated between the initial teachers. We didn't announce each teacher as a model student, but if the teacher took notes, the students saw that and got busy. If the teacher asked questions, the students felt free to ask theirs. We also modeled healthy professional interpersonal interactions without having a lesson on it. It included; respect, courtesy, problem-solving skills, how to ask questions, working with others, struggling with the material, and pride of accomplishment. Team teaching has become central to our program because of its unexpected positive benefits. It is worth mentioning that the team-teaching approach is also helpful with regard to the specific needs of the adults we serve. If there are student issues that arise, class can continue, and one teacher can address the needs of the individual student right away without disruption to the other classmates.

COURSE STRUCTURE

During the development of procedures for the program, we were aware that we needed to help develop time management skills in the program. The dean and associate dean recognized that the students targeted for a high school equivalency degree are likely to have many outside influences like generational poverty, incarceration issues, familial responsibilities, and addiction issues. The solution the leadership team devised was to develop five units of three weeks each for our 15-week semester. Each unit has a theme and a guiding question. The themes are preparation, building, balance, challenges and obstacles, and change. The themes reflect the students' process of getting a diploma or starting a career. At first, they need to get prepared, then they are building their skill. Along the way, they need to balance many things and there will be challenges and obstacles. Finally, there is change, leading to graduation. The guiding questions for each unit are social studies/civics based. They are:

- What is legitimate authority?
- How do geographic context and economic systems affect the way people live and work?
- How do we balance liberty with equality?
- How has the United States of America lived up to the five fundamental promises of the Declaration of Independence (equality, rights, liberty, opportunity, and democracy)?
- How has the meaning of citizenship evolved?

These questions provide a theme for the unit. The lessons within the units are designed with these questions in mind. The instruction allows for exploration, problem-solving, and reflection. Students need to complete all five units, but they don't necessarily need to take them in sequential order. Students may step out of the face-to-face course due to personal circumstances and then choose to complete the missed unit using

the online version. The online version is more individual and doesn't build the cohort and develop as many transition skills, but it does provide an opportunity for students to learn the same competencies found in the face-to-face curriculum, and it is a safety net for students who may need this option. (See Appendices A and B.)

DEVELOPING TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

We often tell our students (and past students tell future students) that the hardest part of this course is getting here. Time management is a great transition skill for our students. It sets a foundation for being a good college student or employee. We don't have formative assessments during the semester, but we have an attendance policy and include participation in the class as attendance. In other words, if a student is sleeping for an hour, he or she is considered absent. If students miss over six hours of class time, they meet with the teachers and a counselor to make a different plan or problem-solve solutions, which may include returning later or opting for the online version. They are not considered out of the program, just on a different plan. (See Appendix C.)

Many of the policies and procedures within the program are there to serve an at-risk population. The three-week units that provide an opportunity to enter or exit at multiple points, the support of two teachers, the support of a counselor, the focus on a future, the cohort building, and the anxiety-reducing environment all contribute to the success of nontraditional students. There have been many instances where students have benefited from this design: the student who was being beaten at home and needed to step in and out over two years, the student who needed an abortion, the student who had no babysitter and needed time to find one, the student who was struggling with addiction and stepped in and out over a two-year period, the student who lost his mother to a heart attack, the student who was incarcerated periodically. It is our belief that once students start the program, they are in it until they complete. This program provides the flexibility and options needed, while maintaining the rigor and high expectations these students can achieve.

REDUCING ACADEMIC ANXIETY

This curriculum design is a non-testing route for students to obtain their HSED. To combat the test anxiety most students arrive with, we don't do formal assessments. We do multiple informal assessments and talk about their future from day one. Both practices are spiraled within the curriculum throughout both semesters. Using a variety of delivery methods that boost confidence and multiple opportunities to work with everyone in the class, students develop cohort relationships that reduce their anxiety through the second semester as they take one course with the cohort (transition) and one on their own, depending on their graded course choice, in math, writing, or science. The themes of the five units in the first semester provide an opportunity to talk about how the students are progressing toward their future. The written and online documents and products they produce in the second semester are all about a future they design themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

When we started teaching the course and got to the end of the first unit, we had a leadership team discussion concerning how to celebrate or acknowledge this accomplishment. We weighed the options between doing nothing and providing students with a certificate. We were concerned about giving out a certificate for each unit when we really wanted them to complete all five. We also felt that getting through one unit was a big deal for us as instructors, so we thought it might feel that way for the students, too. We decided on certificates and it was a very humbling experience. It continues to be. Students were overcome with emotion and reported that they framed their certificates or put them on their refrigerator.

We hand the certificates out at the end of each of the three-week units and shake hands and clap for each student as practice for when they walk across the stage in a black gown. The certificates are a meaningful recognition of students changing their lives and accomplishing something. It is good leadership that allows for experimentation and acknowledgment of success.


SUMMARY

We accomplished our goals. We did it together. We shortened the time it takes for students to obtain their HSED. We provided a transition to college or career for these HSED students. We have a program with the flexibility needed for adult students to earn their HSEDs. We have developed cohorts that support students working toward achieving their goal of earning their HSEDs. We have integrated the use of technology in a meaningful way so students can get future jobs with their HSEDs. We have created a learning environment that reduces anxiety and provides just-in-time learning with rigor and high expectations so that our students feel pride in themselves when they earn their HSEDs. We have taught them how to manage their time and prioritize learning and their future. We have developed a program, not just a course.

This is our favorite class to teach. We think it's because what we learned from teaching an integrated spiraled thematic high school equivalency class is just as important as what the students learned. Few teachers and administrators get the chance to take the lead in creating an innovative curriculum that can be team taught with the budgets of today. The team-teaching benefits, the reduction of anxiety, the pride we feel and see in our students, and the maintenance of high rigor in curriculum and time management were a sweet surprise to us. We watch adults grow before our very eyes. They seem to walk taller, smile more, engage in discussions and conversation at a college level, and dream of a different future for themselves and their children. ☘

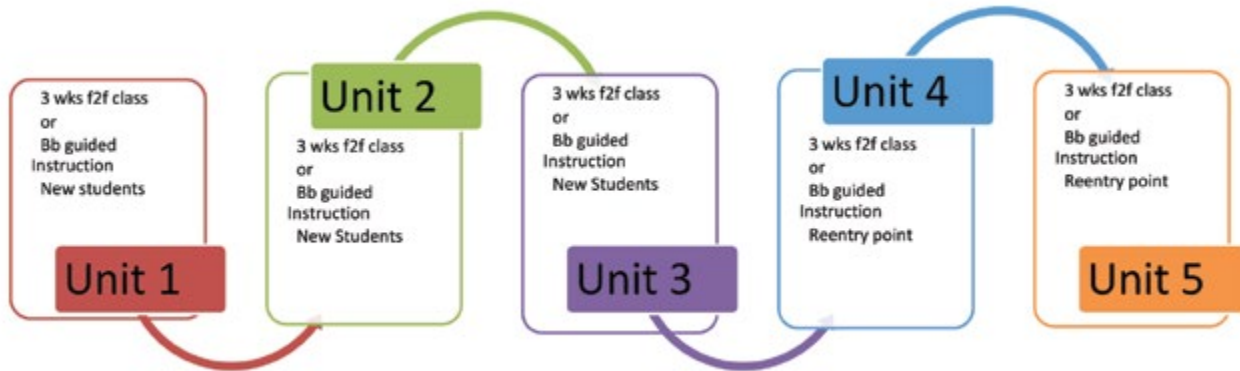
Karla Walker has been in public education for 25 years. She has taught high school biology, life sciences, chemistry, and physical chemistry in Wisconsin and Texas. She has taught pre-algebra, basic math, biology, and chemistry at the technical college level in Wisconsin.

APPENDIX A: ADULT DIPLOMA PROGRAM

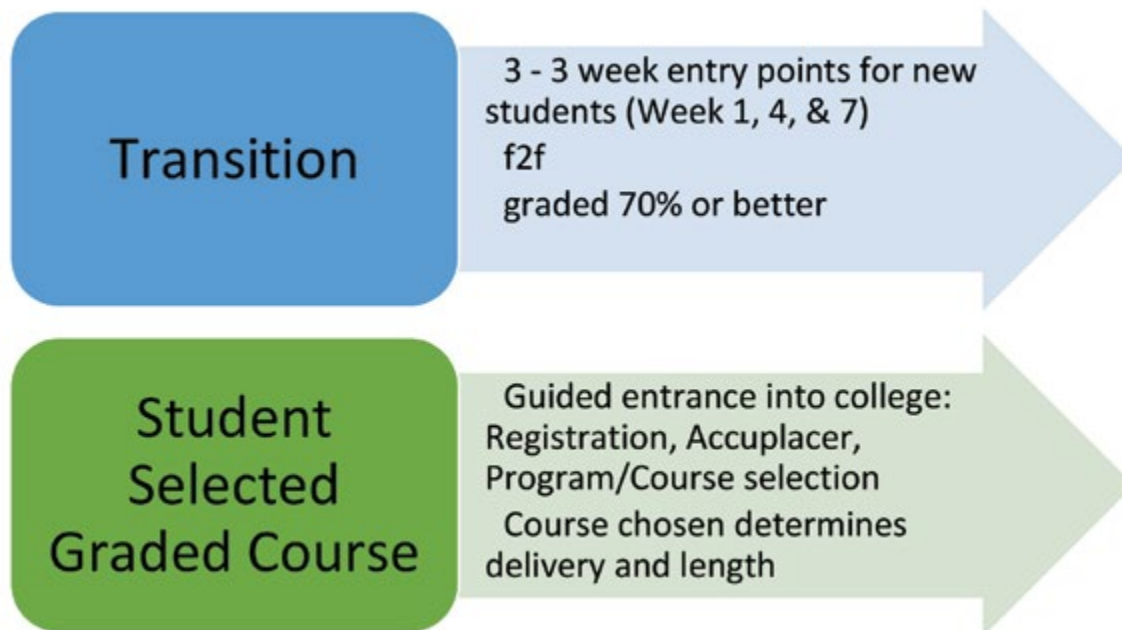
Western Technical College Adult Diploma Program (5.09) High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED)	
Semester 1	Semester 2
<u>Option #1 Adult Diploma Course</u> Meets face to face 3 days/week X 3 hours/day for 15 weeks Managed enrollment 3 possible entry dates (Week 1, 4, or 7) <u>Option #2 Adult Diploma Lab</u> Instructor guided Computer based 6 - 8 hours/week recommended Open enrollment <u>Option #3 Substitutions</u> Previous coursework Test scores Work experience Other	<u>Requirement #1 Transition Course</u> Meets face to face 2 days/week X 3 hours/day for 15 weeks Managed enrollment 3 possible entry dates (Week 1, 4, or 7) <u>Requirement #2 College Course</u> Credit bearing Grade of 'C' or better Career Pathway based <u>Requirement #3</u> Civics exam
400 North Seventh Street, La Crosse—608-785-9535	
	

APPENDIX B: ADULT DIPLOMA (HSED 5.09)

Semester 1



Semester 2



APPENDIX C: ATTENDANCE POLICY

There are a few reasons why we landed on 6 hours of grace for attendance. One is that we are covering 6 different subject areas and theoretically students would be missing much larger portions of the curriculum on every subject area with more absence than 6 hours. We are grant-funded and must account for students' hours of instruction, and there needs to be a reasonable amount of time in each subject area even though the curriculum is not siloed. A second reason for the attendance policy is that we are constantly building cohort and if there isn't consistent attendance this process is stymied. In order to cover the topics and discussions in the later units we need to build trust between the students. A third reason for the attendance policy is that there are assessments being made on a daily/hourly basis. If students aren't attending, they are getting a checkerboard instruction with lots of missing pieces. This is possibly how many of these students attended in the past, and it still doesn't work. We are hoping to change attendance patterns so they can become better students or employees by building better attendance habits.

Finally, students are told that we are assessing their progress constantly and since we don't have grades, tests, or homework assignments, the only thing we do insist upon is participation and attendance. Students rise to this standard. We have written *determination* on the board for a whole semester as a description of what it takes to succeed in this course/program. We have seen students problem-solve with us or with classmates about how to get to class on time. We do keep track of minutes since we have three-hour class periods. There is leeway on the first 15 minutes, but if a student has a habit of coming in late every day by the same amount of time, we talk about it. If you set the standard and provide quality instruction and a positive, safe environment, the students want to be there. When some students miss over 6 hours, they are upset and want to talk about being "kicked out." As a team, we work hard to change the conversation to stepping out or doing what's best for the student at the time. They are not "kicked out" of the program. There are just alternative methods of gaining the same knowledge if circumstances in their life are preventing their attendance, while upholding the standards set for the program.

STARTING AND SUSTAINING AN EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM ON ADULT EDUCATION CAMPUSES

Ruzanna Hernandez, Ed.D.

Fontana Adult School

Do you have an adult education site that needs a strong student leadership team to help you build capacity and increase student voice in decision making? At Fontana Adult School, we saw a need to create a strong, unified student group on campus to help us not only promote our school and the services we offer the community, but also to improve our school climate and understand student needs better. At the end of 2018, we created a student leadership team on our campus, and it has made a huge impact on our success as an adult school. This is the story of how we made that happen.

Three years ago, our administrative team began holding occasional meetings called "Let Your Voice be Heard" on our campus. Each classroom chose one representative to come on a particular day to meet and get up-to-date information to take back to their peers. This is a commonly practiced method used in high schools to hear students' concerns and pass along important information. "Let Your Voice be Heard" was very helpful in disseminating information to our students, especially about upcoming events and resources available to students.

During the first semester of 2018, we realized there was a need to not only disseminate information and receive student feedback, but also to build capacity in terms of volunteerism. We saw a need for a Student Body group, much like an associated student body (ASB) group on a high school campus. When we talked about the idea with staff members, many of them who had been on various other adult school campuses said they had never seen an actual ASB group exist effectively on any of their school campuses. In middle schools and high schools, there is a special period of the day for ASB and students get a grade for the work they perform as students in the class. We did not want to have a class for students to take. We just needed a group of students to help represent us, provide us with feedback, represent their peers by bringing their concerns to us, and help us with various projects. Hence, we began our student leadership team, composed entirely of volunteer students, by taking the proper steps to making it happen.

Step 1: As the assistant principal of Fontana Adult School, I sent an email to every teacher on campus soliciting names of students who would be good candidates for the team. I was given approximately 42 names of students who teachers felt would do well, based on seeing leadership skills in them after having worked with them in class for a few months.

Step 2: I set three meetings on a Monday in November: One in the morning hours, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. I realized that we have students who come to class at different times of the day and therefore needed various meeting times. I called and mailed a letter to each of the 42 individuals inviting them to attend one of the sessions. Approximately half of the students actually showed up that day.

Step 3: During the first meeting, I explained to the approximately 20 students what we were trying to do by creating a student leadership team and described the incentives for joining. I told them how important it was for our principal, Cindy Gleason, and me to have a strong student voice on our campus to drive our

decision-making. I explained over and over again that the help they would provide as part of membership would benefit them personally, their fellow students, the school as a whole, and the community at large. I had to create buy-in because I was asking these busy adults, most with families and jobs, to give up more of their time for their school. From that first meeting, I was able to get approximately 12 of the students to become ardent members right away. I created a group on the Remind app to communicate all upcoming events and meetings.

Step 4: As the first group of students began to work with us on various projects, other students with whom they communicated came and wanted to become a part of the leadership team. They asked how they could join, which was an amazing “win” for our administrative team. It was becoming obvious after the first few weeks that we had something awesome going on—students who wanted to give back to their school and the community, and wanted to build leadership skills by becoming a part of a small organization.

How and why these folks became members of a student leadership team has a lot to do with their willingness to volunteer and serve others. According to Kemp (2002), volunteerism is a personal investment by people who spend their time freely with no rewards. These individuals make great contributions to the economy and development of their local communities.

Since November of 2018, our student leadership team at Fontana Adult School has helped us with multiple tasks and projects:

- participating in fairs to represent our school and disseminate information



- recruiting blood donors for our annual blood drive
- printing and distributing flyers and class catalogs around the city at various business locations
- preparing certificates and distributing them to recipients at the end of each semester
- visiting classrooms to talk to students about local employment opportunities
- helping organize staff appreciation events by decorating, putting together gifts, and getting fellow classmates to write thank-you letters



- promoting field trips to our local community college (Chaffey) to encourage their peers to take the next step in their lives by registering for college
- changing the look in the Citizenship Preparation classroom to help students feel that they are part of something grand when they enter the room
- speaking in front of the Fontana Unified School District board of directors about the opportunities at the school and expressing gratitude



- preparing large posters to display at district's main office and where board of director meetings are held



- helping us prepare for a visit from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- helping the custodial team on campus with various projects
- serving as ambassadors for the school

I text the group when help is needed with a project or task using the Remind app. The most recent request was for help with graduation practice. We needed four to five members to help with student lines, photos, and overall organization. We received the help we needed. During the summer months, we will receive help from the group with school beautification projects, and by serving as ambassadors during registration time at the end of July.

We hold formal meetings as often as we can, typically every month, to gather as many members as possible to address any issues we have and to hear their opinion on various projects. We also present the results of our most recent surveys to educate them on what is happening in and around the community. We have introduced the student leadership team to their peers by visiting classrooms and by having them on stage during events, such as our talent show. It makes the team members proud when they see their peers on campus calling out their names to tell them "hello," even though they do not know them personally. Even faculty members stop and talk to the leadership members when they see them. Being acknowledged means a lot to the team. Some of the other advantages for their service in the team include

- practicing their English speaking skills—especially ESL students
- building employability skills

- celebrating successes of the school by participating in potlucks
- being part of a team that volunteers and helps altruism at school
- feeling a sense of worthiness and belonging by helping contribute
- receiving special stoles to wear during the graduation ceremony
- getting volunteer hours to put on resumes
- getting letters of recommendation to help join the workforce
- receiving recognition by the district office for their efforts
- feeling proud because their family members know that they are part of something big and wonderful at adult school
- receiving tee-shirts for student leadership team members
- seeing their work highlighted on a special webpage
- building a good reputation among peers and staff
- becoming more knowledgeable about the school and learn how to navigate the educational system—especially immigrant students

There are kind, giving, and benevolent individuals everywhere among us. All it takes is for us, administrators, to ask for help. Those who are naturally giving, or see the power their gift of time would have on others, will step in and help. Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) conducted a study to find the 10 personal values which impact the attitudes and behaviors of those who volunteer and serve. They found that volunteers have certain personal values, such as benevolence, concern for others' welfare, aspiration for responsibility and loyalty, honest relationships with others, and willingness to lend a hand in a time of distress. These are all qualities we see in our student leadership team members.

One of the most active student volunteers is a young man who was brought on board by one of our guidance technicians. The student has been putting four to six hours each day into volunteering while working on his studies to finish his high school diploma after four years of attendance. He is finally finishing his classes, and has even signed up for summer school just to be able to finish. Even though he is in his late 20s, this leader says he never thought he had true purpose in life until he started volunteering in student leadership. He feels that he is part of something big, and even looks forward to Mondays so he can come back to school. This particular student's story, alone, makes the journey of beginning and sustaining a student leadership team more worthwhile.

It is important to note that some students may give more time to serving than others, depending on their school or work schedule, family structure, health situation, and transportation. This is why I communicate with the group using the Remind app. I reach out for help, and whoever can come on whichever day I need them, responds back. Sometimes, I send individual messages to each person rather than the group.

In the next school year, the goal is to grow membership. The leadership team is 29 members strong at this time. It would be nice to have the team grow to approximately 50 to build even more capacity. We want to have some of our members participate in classrooms to help their peers in ESL, High School Diploma, High School Equivalency classes, and Career and Technical Education classes. We also need their help in increasing enrollment. One of the proposals from our recent members by team members was to go to local swap meets to disseminate information, particularly about our Citizenship and ESL classes. Educating the community and providing them with opportunities to receive the free resources that we offer is a top priority for our students.

It is interesting now to stop and think, after five months of such strong student volunteerism at our school site, how much further we have been able to come with our survey collections, school projects, and activities because we had the help we needed. Bringing the student leadership team on our campus was a game changer for us.

It is important to acknowledge the strong support of our principal, our district office, and the faculty and staff of Fontana Adult School in helping grow and sustain the student leadership team. We have seen how successful the program is and will continue to make every effort to give our students voices, and build their leadership skills by helping them become a part of something amazing at their school. 🌀

Ruzanna Hernandez, Ed.D. has worked for Fontana Unified School District since 2008, serving as a classified employee, then a certificated employee (high school math teacher), and currently, an assistant principal at Fontana Adult School. Prior to becoming an assistant principal, Dr. Hernandez taught at Fontana Adult School for six years, primarily mathematics in the High School Equivalency (GED) program. She is a strong advocate for the economic development of the Inland Empire, and her local communities. Hernandez has her Bachelor of Science degree from California State University in Los Angeles, two master's degrees, and a doctoral degree from the University of La Verne.

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REFLECTION

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Surviving the Shifting Sands of Change

(Primarily based on the work of Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky)

Jacqueline E. Korengel, Ed.D.

Kentucky Skills U

***“Everything is in a state of flux, including the status quo.” ~ Robert Byrne
(as cited in Pritchett & Pound, 2008)***

David Rosen wrote in 2014 that several trends in adult basic education would be transforming learning, including: flipped classrooms; online curricula; computer-based assessment; and blended, authentic distance, and mobile learning. Moreover, current and more recent emerging trends require adaptations to advance adult learning. “Urbanization, automation and globalization are resulting in unprecedented waves of novelty and complexity... in the future. And that means we all need to learn fast and keep learning” (Vander Ark, 2017).

With the need to accelerate and perpetuate lifelong learning, there is an expectation that there will be greater reliance on artificial intelligence and automated skill assessment (e.g., adaptive learning), more opportunities for and perceived value of demonstrated mastery versus degrees, growth of entrepreneurship and on-demand learning, institutionalization of learning plans, and continued advocacy for working adults. So how can adult educators weather the storm through shifting sands and remain standing?

Ronald Heifetz, founder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University, and Marty Linsky, adjunct lecturer in public policy at the Center, describe adaptive leadership as “the activity of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (“Becoming,” 2011, p.26). If we portray the current environment of adult learning as a “living system,” Heifetz and Linsky assert, successful adaptations are necessary to enable a living system to survive and thrive. The tenets of adaptive leadership include:

- embracing and mobilizing others to embrace an evolution of combinations and variations in strategies that help the organization to thrive under challenging circumstances;
- implementing successful adaptive changes that build on the past rather than jettison it; distinguishing between what “heritage” (previous strategies) to preserve and what is expendable;
- adapting through experimentation; learning to improvise;
- diversifying “the gene pool... the secret of evolution is variation, which in organizational terms could be called distributed or collective intelligence;”

- predicting and recognizing defensive posturing, patterns, responses (“old DNA”)...and knowing how to counteract them;
- acknowledging that adaptation takes time; species’ adaptations evolve over time to enhance their capacity to survive—organizations need time to consolidate adaptations into new sets of norms and processes. (“Becoming,” 2011, p. 26-27)

Adaptive leaders often exhibit traits, abilities, and/or capacity to: link organizational change to stakeholder vision, mission, and values; stimulate diversity of views and leverage collective knowledge; alleviate what might be considered a painful process by foreseeing and curtailing reluctant team behavior; understand that large-scale change is a gradual process that requires persistence and resilience; proactively invest in the necessary resources to pursue opportunities; admit mistakes and change or reject non-productive strategies; be open to experimentation and risk-taking; and advance innovation (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.).

Much like the Bridgeses’ advice on change management in *Managing Transitions* (2017), adaptive leaders must assist stakeholders with adjusting their perceptions of being “disloyal to the past” and ultimately end, lose, and let go of the “old ways” (Corporate Finance Institute, n.d.). Adaptive leadership is about meeting shifting priorities by experimenting and discovering new knowledge, creating an environment of transparency and mutual trust, offering a willingness to listen, and providing a safe environment in which to make mistakes.

As an illustration and in keeping with the theme of a living system, the octopus helps to visualize how adaptations have led to its **survival and longevity**. The oldest known octopus fossil belongs to an animal that lived 296 million years ago (Kalupa, 2012). To put this in perspective, before life on land had progressed to supporting dinosaurs, octopi had long been established.

During its lifetime, the octopus’s brain continues to increase in both size and cell number, increasing its capacity to learn and leverage knowledge. It is one of only a few animals known to use tools and is considered a problem solver—a skill frequently exhibited in captivity. The Pacific octopus can fit in any opening larger than its beak. Image a 50-plus-pound octopus climbing through a hole about two inches in diameter. While his escape may be a deliberate process, it clearly demonstrates persistence and a willingness to invest in necessary resources to pursue opportunities (escape).

The octopus possesses regeneration capabilities and is able to regrow up to one third of its arm in less than six weeks, which definitely reveals resilience. Probably best known for its ability to camouflage, the mimic octopus may reject or adjust to a more productive strategy for defense by displaying faculties that mimic flatfish behavior. Many flatfish are known to be toxic to other sea creatures. By undulating “across the ocean floor, gracefully extending all eight legs backward to take on the shape, motion, and speed of a flounder, even flattening its head and positioning its eyes prominently” (Baker, 2010, p. 962), this octopus has used discovery, innovation, and taking risks over time, to make the necessary adaptations to confuse and ward off potential predators.

Organizationally, Amazon’s Jeff Bezos is a classic example of an adaptive leader (among other leadership characteristics). Even after experiencing phenomenal success, Amazon continues to embrace the value of collective knowledge, risk-taking, and continuous innovation. Bezos recently stated, “Amazon is willing to continue to take risks and learn from its failures while simultaneously supporting successful areas of its business...” (Voice of America, 2019).

With increased competition for limited resources from existing and new organizations entering the adult education arena, and shifts in funding, performance and accountability expectations, and priorities (workforce development, college and career readiness, reduction in reliance on public assistance, etc.), the need for adult

education leaders to adapt to survive and thrive is ever present. The ability to evolve adaptations—such as using the collective knowledge of stakeholders to identify strategies that work and build on them, devoting a willingness to experiment and innovate and taking risks to implement novelty (even if learning occurs as a result of failure), and seeking new opportunities to adjust and modify—can make the difference between thriving and obsolesce. 🌀

Jacqueline E. Korengel, Ed.D. possesses an educational background in business administration and workforce development. During her professional tenure, she has served in a variety of leadership roles in adult education and training, including state administration, service provider network professional learning and technical assistance, essential skills development and implementation, high school equivalency oversight, and private-sector enterprise curricula and instructional design and training development, implementation, and evaluation. As Deputy Executive Director of KY Skills U, Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, she is cooperatively responsible for ensuring coordination, alignment, and execution of office units' strategic and collaborative endeavors to support and perpetuate student success.

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IT STARTED WITH HOPE

Pat Hughes

Lawrence Adult Education & RSU 3 Adult Education (Fairfield & Thorndike)

The question that has been haunting me since I obtained my master's degree in educational leadership in 2015 is: *What is the purpose of education?* The simple answer is that the learning process is a cycle and everyone needs to be engaged to make this process work. In the book *Trust Matters*, by Megan Tschannen-Moran (2004), the essence of learning is important because "sharing information increases the vulnerability of others, because with knowledge comes power. Any 'place' education occurs needs to be where information is shared" (p. 25). Said simply, sometimes the teacher needs to be the first learner. The meaning of trust is "one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p.17). Trust is a choice that involves risk. Trust is neither given or taken. It is created by the sharing of the above traits with each other and without it, learning is impossible. Trust fosters and protects the ideals of respect, tolerance, and democracy, as well as the vision of equity in our society.

Leaders are only leading when followed. We lead at the whim of others. What if the real question I should be asking is: *Should a leader hone the skills to support and inspire others to become leaders in their own role in life?* What if a leader encouraged others to be everything they can and live up to more than they ever thought they could? This idea resonated with the idealist I am. That question led me to pursue the concept of lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep learning.

Lifelong learning occurs from birth through adulthood. This is the acquiring of fundamental behaviors by using real-world information. It is the "breadth" of learning. It is about the regulation of human relationships, but educators can use those authentic learning opportunities to increase and enhance adult learning. In adults, sometimes responses need to be unlearned before new learning can occur.

Life-wide learning happens over multiple settings. A person is always learning something, somewhere. School is the formal learning center. Family, friends, and community are the informal learning centers. This is where the student learns to deal with the "core issues" like conflict, comfort and support systems, human interactions, and relationships. One educational model that embraces this concept is family literacy programming. This four-component comprehensive program uses literacy as a means to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. As I learned in the book cited above, *Trust Matters*, by Megan Tschannen-Moran, knowledge is power. The adult education instruction, parent education, early childhood instruction, and intergenerational literacy activities are molded into a seamless transition to form a new educational paradigm for the entire family. Modeling is one of the most powerful teaching tools we use, and the core belief that parents are the first and most influential teachers in their child's life can create realistic teachable moments. The family becomes fully engaged in the educational process, both learning and teaching each other all the time and everywhere. This is why it is vital that community and families are involved with and understand the educational process.

Life-deep learning comes from collaborative and cooperative experiences with others. It is about creating

adaptive change, creating new habits, and forever learning from those you work with and for. It is about building capacity with humility and humor to ultimately become self-sufficient, informed participants of a global society. This learning gives us the moral, ethical, and social values of how we act and how we judge others. It guides how we approach change with a turn of events or a crisis. It is created by authentic and meaningful learning circumstances and opportunities. Behavioral change happens mostly when engaging a person's emotions or feelings. It is the reason students and teachers must be engaged to learn.

I first rolled out this idea at the State of Maine's *Literacy Now* webinar series, which was well received by the audience. The 2012 *Literacy for ME* plan states, "Literacy learning is a lifelong process from birth through adulthood" (p. 14).

Teaching literacy is not [done in one place]. It involves the determined efforts of many individuals and organizations, starting with parents, grandparents, older siblings, and caregivers.... Acquiring literacy skills does not end with the completion of high school; it is a process in which the student continues to be involved into adulthood... adult education programs that encourage parents to plant the seeds of literacy in their children" (p. 6). The lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep learning concepts fit in well with their definition of literacy.

After exploring these concepts, we started to change the experience offered in adult education in the two rural programs I administer in Maine. It started with the staff, because as stated above, one effective way to lead is to model. We have "no agenda" meetings. All the "usual" meeting items, like policies and procedures, are done via email or in private. We sit around a table, and talk about students only. The meetings were very quiet in the beginning, but I would not lead the discussion. We would only discuss what learning is occurring, what are teachers doing, and is it working? We discussed the difference between personalized, individualized, and differentiated learning, and who did which one, which one worked best, and how can we learn to do all of them. We talked about student outcomes, and what we were doing or not doing to make those happen. We changed our attendance policy to be as flexible and wide reaching, via technology, as possible. We discussed the book *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*, by Kegan and Lahey (2001), to take the "complaining" language we all use and turn it into the language of resolution. For example, presently, staff and students no longer use the words *can't* or *stupid* in the programs. This is done to create an environment of personal responsibility in our speech. According to Kegan and Lahey, "Leaders who take an interest in fostering the language of personal responsibility are likely to find themselves in far more productive conversations with their employees and are likely to foster far more productive conversations among their employees" (p. 34). Based on research with students in the book, it is not about just solving problems, but about solving "us." The problems that solve "us" are the ones where we genuinely learn. They change how we think. Anyone in the program who says either of those words (*can't* or *stupid*) has the responsibility to state that those words inhibit us from moving forward with our educational goals. Using those words is a choice, and can give us an excuse to stop trying to continue. It also ties back to the concept that teachers, as well as students, are learners in this process.

My life in educational leadership started with hope. Cherishing a desire with anticipation, desiring something with the expectation of obtainment, and even hoping without any basis for expecting fulfillment started my journey of becoming an educational leader. I know that if I ever lose that hope, I will burn out in this field rather quickly and will not be an effective leader any longer. I am also an extreme idealist. This trait is the reason that I used to react when my high expectations were not met, but I have learned to respond, not react, to my idealism and not allow my high expectations to negatively impact students or staff. An esteemed colleague once explained why this trait was rare, complex, and valuable to have. He defined idealism as the

persistent, consistent, and insistent pursuit of high-minded, worthwhile goals and objectives for the benefit of others, rather than for personal gain (other than altruistic fulfillment). However, there is a negative side of idealism, and that is how I saw this trait long ago: The idealist has false expectations, is out of touch with the real world, has an unrealistic view of life, and is naïve. What I learned was that the negative side of idealism was what actually gave me the hope I needed to do this leadership work. Without those traits, I wouldn't be able to sustain the firm and uncompromising belief that all can learn and reach their full potential. It is the unique blending of those positive and negative traits that is the source of the hope. I completely believe in students and staff, even if they don't believe in themselves at first. I've learned to control my deep disappointment from others not meeting my expectations, and strive to help others see that sometimes the negative side of a process can be the answer to questions that no one ever asks and that acknowledging and accepting the negative can lead to a meaningful foundation for future growth.

And what is the ultimate outcome of this process? We have come to believe that, though the system is not perfect, there are ways to change how education works in each of our roles within the larger educational system. It is our personal actions and responses to what is happening, not what the overall system is doing or not doing, that will help us reach transformative change. As time passes, this process seems to take away the power of the excuses we used to hear because we work through the educational process with the students, focusing on what they want to accomplish. It becomes their journey, not ours. For me, there is no external answer to the question *what is the purpose of education*. The paradigm shift has to be within ourselves to help learners become all they can or want to be, and perhaps help them see what they can be. A leader needs to decide to work within either a transformative change or a transactional change environment. Hope is essential in leadership at all levels for true transformative change to occur. Without it, we are just going through the motions, and are not moving toward a successful future. Transformative change is difficult and will shake the ground beneath one's feet, but there is a deep need to involve all levels in the 21st century educational journey that we must embark on and quickly master. The urgency to embrace this leadership challenge and the hope to succeed are real and must be acknowledged for the system to survive and be considered a valued resource to a self-sustaining society! ❀

Patricia Hughes has lived in New England her entire life and has been a writer since eighth grade. Currently, she lives in rural mid-Maine, and enjoys the spirit of the entire northeast region, which truly can be found outdoors on the extensive islands and extraordinary mountains that exist here. At this time, she is working as a director in the Maine adult education field and has been working in education for over 30 years. She is the director in two rural programs in central Maine.

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LEADERSHIP: A REFLECTION FROM AN ADULT EDUCATOR'S POINT OF VIEW

Grayla Reneau

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The thoughts expressed in this reflection article are my own. They come from my experiences in life, work, my academic background, and various readings. The reflection is written in order to provoke the reader to consider what it means to be a leader and to evaluate the qualities necessary to lead and the role they play in developing leadership qualities in others. This reflection will challenge the reader to consider that leaders may be found in unexpected people and places; in the workplace, the classroom, or inside themselves. Whether in an actual assigned position of leadership or by default, leading others requires one to make decisions, and possibly sacrifices, that motivate others to succeed. In writing this reflection, the hope is that the reader will be encouraged to bring the qualities of leadership discussed in this article into their work and to influence those around them to do the same.

"He is a born leader." "She is a born leader." Most of you reading this article have heard this phrase before. Maybe the person who is being referred to is you. Are all leaders born, or can leaders be created? What does it take? Good genes, good environment, or maybe both? According to *Webster's NewWorld Dictionary of the American Language* (1982), leadership is "the position or guidance of a leader; the ability to lead." In addition, the word *lead*, by definition, means "to show the way to, or direct the course by going before or along with; to show the way in this manner." For years, psychologists, historians, teachers, and parents, to name a few, have pondered what it takes to make a leader.

As a former adult education instructor, I believed showing respect to be one of the best qualities of leadership. I believed that respect for those who were in my classes was one of the most important goals to have, and as a leader in the classroom, it was my responsibility to *model* respect.

I am sure that many of you have experienced students who were disrespectful, rude, and even belligerent. Instructors, as people, first may be tempted to devalue such a person. However, only someone who is confident as a leader will be able to meet that person where he or she is and without treating him or her in kind, guide that person into often scary territory—the land of past failures and *possible* future successes.

In my recent change from working as an Adult Basic Education Instructor and Literacy Assessment Specialist in a community college setting, to working as an Adult Education Program Specialist in state leadership, I have a responsibility to model the qualities of leadership. While my role is not one of being prescriptive, it does require that I provide grant oversight and technical assistance to local adult education providers. My experience of having been "on the ground," so to speak, gives me the opportunity to be a bridge: I have insight into strategies that work well in practice, as well as those that sound good only in theory.

Most of the time, diplomacy and respect are the order of the day. I view my role as one of coming alongside the local providers that I support while enforcing the terms of the grant, state policy, and federal regulations that must be adhered to. Keeping abreast of and well-versed in these, along with collaborating with colleagues who provide a wealth of knowledge and experience, help to ensure that my leadership is on point and serves the best interest of both the state and the local providers. Leaders are life-long learners.

I believe that the ability to recognize that new is not always better, and discern when it is time for change, are qualities that benefit those in leadership positions. Many times, it is difficult to see the other point of

view. On the one hand, I know firsthand how difficult it can be for local providers to meet the requirements to have students make measurable skills gains and to increase their educational functional levels. On the other hand, programs where students do not make progress need to be evaluated and held responsible for making necessary changes to improve instructional practices.

I am sure that it comes as no surprise that not every policy, regulation, or plan implemented rolls out as seamlessly as envisioned. And yet, there is some merit in each. The goal is enabling students who attend adult education programs to reach their full potential, whether it be earning a high school diploma or its equivalent, or upgrading skills needed in today's technology-rich workplace.

Leaders understand that their job is not just to lead themselves, but to create other leaders. They understand the power of multiplication. In the classroom this can be done by allowing students to take the lead in discussions, overseeing classmates signing in and out of each class session, and promoting accountability in communication when there is an unavoidable class absence. Often the result of giving responsibility to others promotes an attitude of taking on a leadership role.

Leaders understand that the buck stops with them. They take responsibility for their mistakes and learn from them. They share the successes, understanding that many times, success comes from a team effort. Even though there is no "I" in team, leaders understand that the good of all often ensures the good of each individual, including themselves. Leaders never stop growing.

Leaders understand that seeking advice is a sign of strength and that having and being a mentor is an insurance policy worth the investment. Leaders recognize the value that wise counsel can bring and do not rely on their own understanding in every situation.

Leaders are people who take action. Leveraging all the expertise, talent, and ideals from a diverse group, and delegating, assigning, and listening to the ideas of others, not just oneself, are the tools skillful leaders use in life, the classroom, and the workplace.

Leaders choose to be positive. They have vision. Even when others around them cannot see, leaders paint a picture in word and deed that enables others to catch the vision too—a possibility, a glimmer of hope. They encourage, motivate, and inspire others to be positive also.

Leaders persist. They see what needs to be done in order to achieve a goal, and they take the steps necessary to achieve it. Even when the outlook seems daunting, leaders persevere, believing in themselves, as well as those who are with them. Leaders believe that sometimes self-sacrifice is necessary.

Every day, people seeking to improve their lives step into adult education classrooms. They are learners, instructors, moms, dads, grandparents, homeowners, homeless, full-time or part-time workers, financially strapped, young, older, and, yes, leaders. These brave individuals envision a future that may be far beyond their reach... at least for now. ✂

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REVIEW

THE NEW THREE R'S—RETENTION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND REAL-WORLD

A Review of *How to Achieve Better Student Retention in Adult Education*

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ABSTRACT

In *How to Achieve Better Student Retention in Adult Education*, by Teddy Eduoard (2019), teachers and administrators get an easy read with short, to-the-point chapters that are full of solutions! Unlike many education books, that are too long for already busy educators, this book gives you chapters that draw you in such as “Understanding Our Calling” and “Identifying the Warning Signs,” not to mention a facilitation guideline that could be used by administrators as an observation tool. As our field turns more to test results and workforce outcomes, we need this book as a reminder of the intricacies, obstacles, and real-world needs of our real-world learners. This book is great for veteran teachers who need a boost and new teachers who need to know that they are not simply doing a job: They are making relationships that can influence their learners for years to come.

INTRODUCTION

It is rare to have leadership development books written for the adult education (AE) field, rarer still to have such a book written by someone truly invested in the field, not just repurposing a K-12 book to get sales within the adult ed field. In *How to Achieve Better Student Retention in Adult Education: Secrets to Becoming an Indispensable Adult-Ed Teacher That Provides a Learning Experience That’s Hard to Walk Away From (and Keeps Administrators Happy!)* (Eduoard, 2019), educators in our field get a book that speaks to their day-to-day struggles and triumphs in a way only a colleague and leader in AE could illustrate. Having been at the teacher, program manager, and director/administrator level of many different types of AE programs, it was refreshing for me to find a nugget of knowledge for every audience. Be it teaching tips, program design ideas, or the “Facilitation Guidelines” (which in my opinion could be easily converted into an observation tool for directors looking to find and define the great work occurring within the classrooms), it is all here.

Below I highlight some of the major strengths of this book, but as a reviewer I want to give one warning: Eduoard writes this book as if he is there talking to the reader and makes the (good) assumption that the

reader is an educator who is already doing a great job in the classroom, who is in this field for all the right reasons, and who has a passion for the art and craft of teaching in the AE field. If this does not describe you, you may find yourself questioning your field of choice. You may feel out of place when he speaks to methods of engagement or certain teaching practices as if we are all “students and masters” of teaching; however, I suggest to you that you may be just the educator who needs this book. This book asks the reader to assume a posture of confidence and passion in their teaching and to not simply “pass through” these AE programs and learners' lives. To press this point, Edouard starts the book with a George Washington Carver quote, *“No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it”* (p. 5).

RETENTION

While the book is not broken down into the three R's of retention, relationships, and real-world, it could easily have been written as a series under those three themes. Edouard provides tangible retention methods such as, “provide learners with tools to help them keep track of their attendance” (p. 31), which must be noted as advice stemming from restorative practices. Yet, it is in the intangibles that the true teaching gems lie. Stories stemming from a range of places from the football field to Silicon Valley are interwoven not only to provide examples of leadership, but to break down the silos that so many AE professionals find themselves in without even noticing. Throughout the book, retention seems to refer not only to learners but to educators as well. Edouard gives encouragement and examples that are meant to remind educators of why they are in this field and why their best is needed as a critical component of learner retention and perseverance. Starting the book with the educator in mind puts forth the correct expectation that retention starts with the educator understanding that their job should be a “calling.” As Edouard puts it, our true calling as adult educators is “about making real change happen so that we make things better for the students we serve” (p. 6). Those outside of the classroom would be smart to use this book as a staff development and enrichment tool.

RELATIONSHIPS

This is the big R...Relationships! Edouard puts a strong focus on all of the types of relationships, including the learners' relationships to the teacher, content, environment, and classwork. He speaks to the importance of giving voice to learners and checking in with them as a way to build relationships. The teacher's relationship to retention is highlighted by the title of Chapter 2, “Taking Matters into Your Own Hands.” In this and other chapters, Edouard inspires teachers to understand that it is up to them to create a system which leads to relationships and, then, retention. Through innovative writing techniques such as lists of warning signs and even a “list of lies,” Edouard has provided teachers multiple roadmaps and ways to connect to learners that build relationships that go beyond simply knowing a learner's interest or desired job.

REAL-WORLD

When you see “real-world,” I am sure what comes to mind are examples stemming from work or life, and, yes, that is part of Edouard's point, but not the whole picture. When discussing real-world-oriented learning, Edouard centers his discussion around skills such as metacognition and cognitive tasks. He compels the reader to consider that as much as teachers must make the writing real or the math focused on work life, they must also create space for learners to make decisions, share opinions, and create products. He asks us to stop seeing our students as vessels to be filled with our brilliant knowledge but instead as contributors to the overall learning environment. As the field of AE becomes more focused on testing and workforce outcomes, it

is important to be reminded that the learners are real and more than a single outcome; in this book, teachers will be reminded of this and given examples of how their work makes real-world change.

Finally, while I appreciate some of the assumptions Edouard makes about the readers' abilities, there are a few points in the book where I believe a bit more explanation or further examples would be helpful. One such point is in Chapter 6, where teaching approaches are discussed. While many instructors may be familiar with case- and project-based learning, this would have been a great place to illustrate and define these methods to better make the connection with retention. As a trainer, I often see how important it is for even well-versed instructors to see a tangible or well-described example to bolster their abilities.

Administrators can add this to their program-wide book list, teachers can share the tips and tools with colleagues, and the AE field can be glad to have another addition to our small but growing canon of professional enrichment books. No matter your position in the adult education field, or how long you have been in it, this book pulls us all out of the silos of our classrooms and programs to guide us through research on retention, anecdotes about the power of relationships, and storytelling leading to real-world tips and tools needed for our real-world learners. ✂

Daquanna Harrison is the founder of Elevation Educational Consulting Group (www.ElevationEd.com) which works on projects within alternative education, workforce, curriculum and teacher professional development, and program implementation. She is a proud graduate of Howard, American, and Duke Universities.

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The background of the poster is a vibrant, futuristic cityscape at night, with glowing blue and white light trails and energy pulses. A large, golden laurel wreath is centered over the text. The text 'COABE' is in a large, white, serif font, with 'COALITION ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. The words 'NATIONAL AWARDS' are in a large, bold, golden, serif font, with a reflection effect below them. Below the awards, the text 'Honoring Excellence in Adult Education' is in a white, serif font. Further down, the prize details are listed in a white, serif font. At the bottom, four categories of awards are listed in a white, serif font, each with its corresponding amount.

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