



Alabama

Allena Williams

Bishop State

Allena Williams is a dedicated educator, director, and small business owner with a diverse background in both adult education and construction management. She serves as the full-time Director of Raphael's Legacy for Restoration, a nonprofit organization focused on providing transitional housing for veterans and displaced older adults. Inspired by her experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, Allena took on the challenge of learning construction to remodel homes and create housing solutions for those in need. Partnering with Raphael, a seasoned construction expert, she now applies her skills to restore campers and sheds, offering crucial support to those in need of transitional housing. In addition to her work in nonprofit housing, Allena is a part-time Adult Education Instructor at Bishop State College, where she teaches ESL to diverse groups of learners, including students with disabilities. She has also held teaching positions at several institutions such as Central State University, Sinclair Community College, and Northern Kentucky University. Allena holds a Master of Education (MEd) in Adult Education from Union Institute and University, a Graduate Certificate in Composition Studies from Indiana University, a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Management from Indiana Wesleyan University and an Associate of Business in Computer Support Technology (AAB). She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Education (EdD) at Walden University, with an expected completion in 2026. Her journey combines a passion for education with practical experience in construction, making her a versatile leader dedicated to uplifting and empowering underserved communities.



Alaska

Deepika Ramesh Perumal

Alaska Literacy Program Inc

Deepika Ramesh Perumal is the Executive Director of the Alaska Literacy Program (ALP), where she brings professional expertise and a personal commitment to advancing adult literacy in Alaska. As an immigrant who navigated similar programs upon arriving in the U.S., Deepika understands the challenges and transformative power of literacy and education. This personal journey fuels her dedication to ALP's mission, recognizing education as a vital asset for individuals and communities alike. Before joining ALP, Deepika was the Director of Finance and Administration at Anchorage Community Land Trust (ACLT), managing financial operations, budgets, and supporting growth alongside the CEO. Her role at ACLT honed her strategic planning, community outreach, and financial expertise—skills she now brings to ALP to expand its reach and impact. Deepika is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment at ALP, ensuring that staff, volunteers, and community members feel empowered and valued. Her focus includes building awareness of ALP's mission through public engagement, social media, and partnerships. By expanding support from foundations, sponsors, and donors, Deepika aims to secure ALP's long-term success with board guidance. Known for her approachable and collaborative leadership style, Deepika builds meaningful connections that reinforce ALP's mission and create positive change in the community.



Arkansas

Theresa Baggett

Crawford County Adult Education Center

Theresa Baggett is a dedicated professional with extensive experience in workforce development, legal services, and community advocacy. Currently serving as a Workforce Coordinator, she collaborates with businesses to design training programs that address skill gaps and empower employees to thrive. With some proficiency in Spanish, she effectively engages with diverse populations, fostering inclusion and bridging barriers to education and opportunity. Certified as a Career Coach, Theresa brings a unique blend of expertise to her work, equipping individuals with essential skills for both personal and professional growth. Her background in the legal field further enhances her ability to address systemic challenges that impact adult learners, particularly those navigating complex social or economic barriers. Passionate about education, Theresa actively advocates for adult literacy and workforce readiness, understanding the transformative power these areas have on individuals and communities. She leverages her professional background and certifications to connect adult learners with essential resources, encouraging lifelong learning and economic mobility. Theresa aspires to contribute to systemic change through advocacy and collaboration. By championing policies that expand access to education and workforce opportunities, she strives to create meaningful pathways for success at the local, state, and national levels.



California

Ilse Pollet

Independent Consultant

Ilse Pollet is an independent consultant working on projects at the intersection of adult education and immigrant integration. Recent projects include CALPRO statewide professional development on adult learner transitions to postsecondary education or the workforce, and critical democratic literacy; and the OCTAE funded EARN project. Ilse served as the Director of the South Bay Consortium for Adult Education (San Jose, CA), a California Adult Education Program (CAEP) consortium of five adult schools and four community colleges, where she was responsible for strategic planning and project leadership related to coordinated delivery of adult education programming across CAEP program areas: English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, Career Technical Education, (Pre)-Apprenticeships and programs for Adults with Disabilities. Prior to that, Ilse was the Executive Director of ALLIES (Alliance for Adult Learners' Integration, Education and Success), a nonprofit coalition of ESL providers in the Bay Area. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degree in Linguistics and Literature: Romance Languages and Teaching Credential from the Catholic University of Leuven (KULeuven) in Belgium; a Designated Subjects Adult Education Teaching Credential from UC Berkeley Extension and a Nonprofit Leadership Certificate from College of San Mateo/Center of Excellence in Nonprofits. Ilse is currently a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D) in Social Justice Leadership program at Santa Clara University.



Colorado

Jacinda Lay

Emily Griffith Technical College

Results-oriented educational leader with over 20 years of experience in curriculum development, adult literacy, and program management, Dr. Jacinda Lay is dedicated to promoting educational access, equity, and accountability. Skilled in strategic planning and team leadership, she designs impactful training programs that meet institutional goals and address the unique needs of adult learners. As Training and Development Manager at Pinnacle Leadership Institute, Dr. Lay creates and delivers comprehensive programs using tools like Articulate 360 and AI. She assesses



training needs, tailors learning materials, and rigorously measures program effectiveness to ensure accountability and continuous improvement. At Emily Griffith Technical College, Dr. Lay champions adult literacy through targeted GED instruction, academic support, and data-driven interventions, enabling students to overcome barriers and build essential skills for workforce success. With a background in technical and community education, including roles at Lincoln Technical College and Hope Communities Inc., Dr. Lay has developed curricula that prioritize equitable access and hold programs accountable for learner outcomes. Her work includes securing resources, building partnerships, and engaging stakeholders to expand community literacy and support educational access. Dr. Lay holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, a Master's in Education, and a Bachelor's in Business Marketing. An advocate for adult education and faculty engagement, she contributes to the Colorado Community College System and leads DEI-focused committees at Emily Griffith Technical College.

Connecticut

Madelyn Cruz

Middletown Adult Education

Madelyn Cruz is a Hispanic professional and domestic violence survivor who brings resilience, empathy, and dedication to her role as a full-time Career Navigator. With over 17 years of experience in the workforce development industry, she has excelled in various roles, including Career Navigator, Interpreter, and Team Lead, providing leadership and support to career agents while championing the needs of adult learners. Her expertise encompasses case management, client assessment, mentoring, workshop facilitation, and delivering exceptional customer service to a diverse clientele. Madelyn is passionate about empowering individuals to overcome barriers, achieve self-sufficiency, and thrive in on-demand fields. She has a proven track record of transforming the lives of Adult Education students by connecting them with critical community resources, employment opportunities, and training programs. In her work with the American Job Center and workforce boards, Madelyn has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing digital equity and bridging gaps in access to technology for underserved populations. She collaborates with local and state organizations to align workforce development strategies with the demands of a rapidly evolving job market, ensuring that adult learners are prepared to succeed in high-demand industries. Bilingual in English and Spanish, she leverages her strong communication skills to build trust and foster connections with clients from diverse backgrounds. As a domestic violence survivor, she is deeply committed to advocacy, equity, and creating pathways for underserved populations to thrive. Through participation in the SAAEF fellowship, Madelyn seeks to amplify her impact by advocating for policies and initiatives that expand access to education, workforce opportunities, and digital equity for adult learners at the local, state, and national levels.



Delaware

Carleen Jones

Organization of Adult Alumni and Students in Service (OAASIS)

Carleen Jones is the OAASIS worker at Appoquinimink Adult Education. She has worked with adult education for 7 years. Her role with OAASIS has been to help the students in any way possible to help them obtain their high school diploma. She is a 2018 graduate from the program and it helped her to achieve a better job.



District Of Columbia

Elizabeth Winn Bowman

Briya Public Charter School

Elizabeth Bowman has worked throughout her career supporting marginalized adults in gaining the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their goals, while also building pathways to decrease barriers. Working for a decade and half in DC, Ms Bowman has supported adult learners who did not have the opportunity to realize



their academic potential as children and therefore have been severely hindered in their opportunities. Specifically, she programmatically oversaw an ABE/ASE program for hundreds annually of primarily US born adults and now serves as Briya Public Charter School's Chief Academic Officer a 2-Gen family literacy ESOL program annually serving 700 immigrant parents and DC adults earning credential in the high demand sectors of early childhood and healthcare. She serves on numerous citywide coalitions advancing adult education, as an advisor in the creation of an innovative Spanish language AA program in early childhood.

Florida

Lorri Benjamin

Brevard Adult & Community Education

Bachelors in Psychology with a concentration in Education – LeMoyne College
Masters in Education- Le Moyne College Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership- Nova Southeastern University Lorri Benjamin is the Director of Adult and Community Education for Brevard Public Schools. With 15 years with Brevard Public Schools she has been afforded the opportunity to work in many different roles in the organization. She began her career in Brevard as an academic coach in mathematics and was a coordinator for one of the high school's magnet programs focusing on STEAM education. She has worked as an administrator in both middle and high School. Previous to these experiences she taught Pre-k- 6th grade in Syracuse, New York. Brevard Adult and Community Education has continued to grow as a place where adult learners re-imagine a new beginning for their formal education by acquiring skill sets that focus on their individual academic and workforce goals. She continues to explore CTE and workforce to build IET opportunities. Relationship building is a strength for Lorri with area business partners, Brevard Adult Education advocates for life-long learning based on inquiry and interest promoting literacy for adults in innovative ways.



Georgia

Christine Miller

Georgia State University

Dr. Christine Miller is the Assistant Project Director at the Adult Literacy Research Center at Georgia State University. Her primary research interests include adult reading development, reading interventions, and curriculum development. She has published and presented her research in peer-reviewed journals and conferences for practitioners, program administrators, and other researchers. Her previous experience teaching reading to adult learners at a community-based program ignited her passion for bridging scientific research to practices in adult education. Christine is also interested in the utilization of digital tools to support reading and writing skill development.



Idaho

Christine Hagedorn Reilly

State of Idaho - Career Technical Education

Christine Hagedorn Reilly has dedicated her career to advocating for students on their language, educational, and employment journeys. After college she lived in several Spanish-speaking countries where she taught English. Returning to the U.S., she continued to teach English, Spanish, literacy, and GED classes, ultimately obtaining a Master's in Speaking English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Christine has coordinated and taught at programs for adult immigrants and refugees in Idaho, and also has expertise in writing educational and assessment materials for the field of adult education. She recently was hired to lead adult education in the State of Idaho as director of Adult Education and GED.



Illinois

Luis Narvaez

City Colleges of Chicago

Luis Alfredo Narváez is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Adult Education at the City Colleges of Chicago, where he leads the free English as a Second Language and High School Equivalency programs, in addition to citizenship classes, computer literacy training, and career bridge programs. In his previous role as Project Director for 10 years at the Chicago Public Schools he led the Seal of Biliteracy initiative recognizing the biliteracy skills of students in K-12 while promoting college awareness to bilingual, immigrant, and Latinx students across the city. He also help develop his district's first-ever scholarship program for undocumented immigrant students, the CPS DREAM Fund, that has had more than 100 Dreamers receiving funds to help finance their college education. Prior to that, he was a recruiter and admissions counselor as well as an advisor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he obtained his BA in Latin American & Caribbean Studies and Spanish. He also has an MA in Educational Leadership through the ENLACE Leadership Institute at Northeastern Illinois University. In addition to being an alumnus of the New Leadership Academy, he recently completed his fellowship with the National Community College Hispanic Council Ted Martinez, Jr. Leadership Program and is also a graduate of the Latino Policy Forum Multicultural Leadership Academy and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs Emerging Leaders Program.



Indiana

Denise Esslinger

Warren Adult & Continuing Education

Denise Esslinger, with an illustrious career spanning the entirety of the education sector, began her journey in elementary education. Her contributions to adult education began as the High School Equivalency Supervisor at Wayne Township. Currently serving as the Assistant Director of Adult Education at Warren Township, Denise plays a crucial role in implementing impactful curriculum for greater outcomes by supervising a team of 50 staff and managing educational programs. She oversees HSE Testing for the program which includes partnering with both GED and HiSET. She participated in Train-the-Trainer program held at the 2024 GED Conference. Denise is a board member of the Indiana Adult and Continuing Education (IAACE) Association. She is the Advocacy Committee chair for IAACE and chairs the committee for the annual Indiana Adult Education Day at the Statehouse. Denise actively works to advocate for adult education and supports the great work done across Indiana and the entire country.



Iowa

AE Mohammed Elmahi

Hawkeye Community College

Dr. Abdallah Elmahi is an accomplished educator and researcher with over 19 years of experience in teaching, curriculum design, and academic advising. Holding a Ph.D. in English Language and an MA in Learning Technologies & Instructional Design, he has a strong passion for advancing education and literacy. Dr. Elmahi has taught diverse learners, including new immigrants in the USA, retired Emiratis in the UAE, and adult learners at Hawkeye Community College, focusing on language acquisition, digital literacy, and professional development. He has contributed to international education through published research on instructional innovation and language learning, including Scopus-indexed journals. Fluent in Arabic and English, Dr. Elmahi brings a culturally responsive approach to his work. His expertise extends to accreditation processes, program development, and supervising graduate research. Dr. Elmahi has also refined his skills with specialized training,



such as ELT for adults at Oxford University, and holds an ICDL certification. Currently based in Iowa, he remains dedicated to empowering learners and enhancing educational practices at local, national, and global levels.

Kentucky

Ashley Vincent Poore

Madisonville Community College Adult Education

Ashley Vincent Poore has been in education for 15 years and currently serves as the Director for the Adult Education program at Madisonville Community College, which supports two rural counties in Western Kentucky – Muhlenberg and Hopkins. Ashley is a graduate of Western Kentucky University, receiving her Bachelor of Arts Public Relations in 2001 and her Master of Arts in Leadership Dynamics in 2010 and later did some doctoral coursework in Educational Leadership. In addition to traditional postsecondary education, Ashley has participated in other learning opportunities: 200 Hour Yoga Teacher Certification, the local Chamber's Leadership Muhlenberg. StrengthsFinder has listed Ashley's strengths as harmony, adaptability, empathy, input, and developer. Ashley is a member of the executive committee for the United Way of the Coalfield Board and is president of Hopkins County Interagency.



Louisiana

Sarina Lirette

River Parishes Community College

Sarina Lirette is the Director of Adult Education at River Parishes Community College, where she leverages her extensive experience as a dynamic, detail-oriented leader adept at inspiring and guiding diverse teams toward shared objectives. With a broad leadership background across NGOs, for-profit organizations, government agencies, and higher education, she brings a multifaceted perspective that instills confidence and motivates excellence in her team. Sarina's commitment to effective team leadership and student engagement exemplifies her strengths as an educator and leader. Sarina holds a Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Management and a Master of Business Administration and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Education in Adult Education. Her academic journey is enriched by over three years in law enforcement leadership, seven years in higher education leadership, twelve years as a business owner, and fifteen years in corporate leadership, all of which underline her dedication to lifelong learning and community service. Sarina's accomplishments include being named the 2020 Louisiana Community & Technical College System - River Parishes Community College Support Professional of the Year, a 2024 River Parishes Community College Excellence in Teaching Adjunct of the Year Nominee, a 2024 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award recipient, and a 2024 Louisiana Association for Public, Community, and Adult Education (LAPCAE) Continuing Education Scholarship recipient.



Maine

Lynn Sheehan

York Adult Education

Lynn Sheehan is a passionate advocate for adult education and the founder of the Collaborative Learning and Social Skills (CLASS) program, a unique initiative that empowers adults with developmental delays, autism, and other disabilities to enhance their communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. With years of experience in adult education, Lynn has dedicated her career to creating inclusive and supportive learning environments that foster independence, confidence, and community engagement. As a presenter at the Maine Adult Education Conference, Lynn has shared her expertise on program development, advocacy, and securing funding for adult education initiatives. Her work emphasizes the importance of collaboration and real-world application, equipping learners with skills that extend far beyond the classroom. Lynn



is an active member of the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE), the Maine Adult Education Association (MAEA), and York Adult and Community Education, where she contributes to advancing opportunities for adult learners statewide. Through these affiliations, Lynn has advocated for increased access to resources and support for underserved populations. Driven by a belief in the transformative power of education, Lynn continually seeks ways to expand the reach and impact of adult education programs. Her dedication to advocacy and innovation has inspired others to prioritize adult learning as a key component of lifelong success.

Maryland

Andrea Fricks

Maryland Association for Adult, Community and Continuing Education

Andrea L. Fricks is a lifelong learner and servant leader. As a native of Cleveland, OH, currently reside in Reisterstown, MD. She is a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Incorporated. She has a BS/Human Services degree, and a MAED/Adult Education & Training degree. She has an MBA in Management, and is currently pursuing her DBA at the University of Maryland Global Campus. She has worked in adult education for over 20 years and served as Vice Chair on the Ohio State Board of Career Colleges and Schools (Gubernatorial Appointment), and the Board of Directors for the Ohio-Michigan Association of Career Colleges and Schools (President). Currently, She serves on the Board of Directors for MAACCE - Maryland Association for Adult, Community & Continuing Education on several committees. She is employed with Baltimore City Community College as the Director of Adult Basic Education. She oversees the GED program and offers alternative high school options and resources in literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy. The ABE/GED program is offered onsite and throughout her Community-Based Organizations and Corrections facilities in the greater Baltimore region.



Michigan

Kristen Swiantek

Michigan Adult, Community, & Alternative Education Association

Kristen is an alumna of Michigan State University, where she earned her Bachelor's degree in International Relations. While in college, she interned at the Michigan House of Representatives as a Legislative Aide. Kristen later served as Director of Constituent Relations for State Representative Kara Hope, ensuring that constituents received quality service. Kristen's years of legislative experience have enabled her to become an effective advocate for important issues, like education. In her current role as Director of the Michigan Adult, Community, & Alternative Education Association, Kristen collaborates with schools and organizations throughout the state to improve academic and career outcomes for Michigan's adult learners.



Mississippi

Sarah Ward

Grenada Adult Education Center

Sarah Ward is a passionate and dedicated adult education instructor who works with diverse adult learners across various backgrounds. Throughout her career, Sarah has specialized in providing individualized support to non-traditional students, helping them achieve their academic and career goals. She holds a master's degree in business administration and brings a diverse wealth of knowledge and expertise from other fields. Additionally, Sarah has continuously advanced her professional development through online workshops and seminars. Sarah is deeply committed to advocacy for adult learners, particularly in underserved communities, such as her own in Grenada, Mississippi. Her work has focused on creating accessible learning environments that bridge the gap between education and employment opportunities. As a state advocate, she will actively collaborate with local



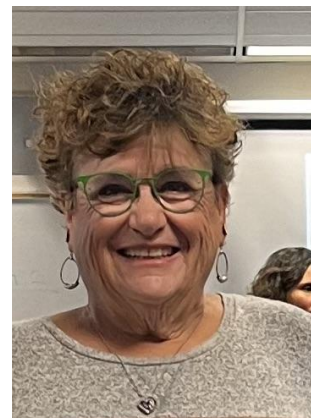
organizations to secure funding and resources for adult education programs, while also raising awareness about the importance of lifelong learning in a rapidly changing job market. Her approach is student-centered, drawing on a mix of instructional strategies tailored to adult learners' unique needs. Sarah has been instrumental in developing curricula that integrate practical skills with academic learning, ensuring her students are not only prepared for exams but also for real-world challenges. As a fellow candidate, Sarah is eager to leverage her experience in adult education and advocacy to influence policy and expand access to quality educational opportunities state-wide. She is particularly passionate about ensuring equitable opportunities for all adult learners, regardless of socio-economic status or prior education.

Missouri

Netty Doyle

Literacy KC

Netty Doyle has taught in the state of Missouri for the past 41 years. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Creighton University in Omaha, NE, and a Master's in Curriculum, and Instruction from Scranton, PA. Netty has worked with students of all ages and various educational settings. Her desire to meet students where they are and help them grow drives her to take advantage of new learning opportunities from professional development to working with educational advocates at the state and national levels. Netty believes that when someone decides to improve their personal situations, it is our responsibility to give them what they need in an education. Just like her younger students, she meets her adult students where they are academically and socially and helps them work towards their goals.



Nebraska

Julie Grives

Lincoln Literacy

Julie Grives is the Associate Director of Adult Skills and Workforce programs at Lincoln Literacy, where she oversees adult skills classes, professional and academic preparation classes and provides grant support. She and her team help students develop individualized career plans as they work to re-enter their professional careers in Nebraska or embark on a new career. Dr. Grives also teaches and develops curriculum for workplace English, digital literacy skills, and specialized industry preparation classes such as healthcare and manufacturing. Dr. Grives has had a long career in education and training. She holds degrees in Pedagogy, French, and Music. Dr. Grives has worked as an instructional designer in industry and academia, designing online tools to train and assess students' learning. She has also written and presented internationally on using well-researched neuroscience principles that allow adult learners to acquire new skills quickly and to retain the new knowledge.



New York

Chantal Michaux

Buffalo Public Schools

Chantal Michaux, a dedicated Case Manager at Buffalo Public Schools-Adult Education since 2001, brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her role. Specializing in various aspects of Adult Education, including CTE programs, HSE, ESL, and program and professional development, Chantal has played a pivotal role in supporting students and families throughout the Western New York area. With a background as a counselor in both K-12 and post-secondary education, Chantal has consistently provided crucial support services. Her commitment to the well-being of individuals extends beyond traditional education, as exemplified during the peak of



the pandemic. Serving as a Community Support Specialist for the New York State Department of Health, Chantal passionately delivered educational, community, and mental health services to individuals in five counties across NYS. Chantal holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and community mental health from the University of Buffalo, coupled with a master's degree in counselor education from Canisius University. Currently on the path to becoming a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), Chantal remains a lifelong advocate for adults, youth, and families. Her unwavering dedication ensures that individuals receive the necessary support to attain their educational and personal goals.

North Carolina

Michael Ellis

Wake Technical Community College

Dr. Mike Ellis presently serves as the Dean of College and Career Readiness at Wake Technical Community College, the largest provider of Adult Education in North Carolina and one of the largest in the Southeast. His degrees compliment his passion to serve and to help adult learners having earned a Bachelor's of Arts in Speech Communication from Indiana University, a Master's of Arts in Education in Adult Education from East Carolina University, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from The Ohio State University in Communication with a focus in Educational Technology. His dissertation, "Uncovering Presence: A Qualitative Study of 2-Way Educational Videoconferencing" came full circle when the pandemic hit. Newly assigned to the role of Dean of a program that was 95% seated, in-person classes, Wake Tech successfully made the conversion to synchronous classes mediated by Zoom and Teams and to asynchronous classes mediated by a host of providers. Wake Tech strives to strike the balance of mediated and seated programming that will best serve as many learners as possible and give them the best opportunity for success.



Ohio

Erika Simmons

The Academy for Urban Scholars

Erika Simmons is an educator and innovator at the Academy for Urban Scholars (AUS) Adult Campus with locations in Columbus, Canton and Youngstown. Erika is an advocate for adult literacy and workforce training programs as her focus is on supporting adult student journeys toward graduation and sustainability. Erika currently serves on the Ohio Association for Adult and Continuing Education (OAACE) Board and Legacy Academy of Excellence Board.



Pennsylvania

Kieran Farrell

Beyond Literacy

Kieran has worked to support a variety of at-risk populations throughout her career. She began her career as a Residential Caseworker for dually diagnosed homeless men and women in Philadelphia and New York. She shifted into Adult Education in 2010 while working with a small tutoring program supporting low-income Philadelphians developing basic literacy skills. It was in this role that Kieran recognized the immense need for adult education services in Philadelphia and realized its impact on the family unit and our larger community. She began working with Community Learning Center in 2012 as Student Support Coordinator and became Director of the Student Support Program (SSP) and Digital Equity at Beyond Literacy in 2022. Kieran leads a team of Student Support Coordinators and Digital Navigators to support participants' goals and ensure access to the essential social service and digital access resources needed to be successful. Kieran has a BA in Latin American Studies and Peace and Justice Studies from Fordham University.

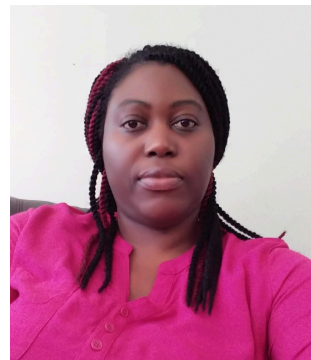


Rhode Island

Sheryl Buchanan

Genesis Center

Sheryl Buchanan has been a dedicated educator in adult education since 2012 specifically in ESOL, citizenship, GED, and IET programs. With a robust academic background and extensive experience in adult education, Sheryl has significantly contributed to the advancement of language education within the community. Sheryl completed a Bachelor of Science in Educational Studies in 2012, followed by a Master of Arts in 2014. Achieving a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, further enhancing their expertise and commitment to educational excellence. As the Education Director for evening programs, Sheryl leads a dynamic team of over 10 instructors, overseeing curriculum development, instructional strategies, and program implementation. Her leadership has been instrumental in fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for adult learners. Under Sheryl's guidance, the evening programs have flourished, providing high-quality education tailored to the needs of diverse learners. Her dedication to professional development and innovative teaching methodologies ensures that both instructors and students achieve their full potential.



South Carolina

Lara Kolb

Clarendon County Adult Education

Lara Kolb is a passionate advocate for adult education with a strong commitment to improving literacy opportunities for underserved populations. With over 30 years' experience in education teaching pre K through Adults and administrating several schools, Lara has dedicated significant time to advancing access to adult learning programs that foster personal and professional growth. Through various roles, including being an Adult Education teacher and Director, volunteering for Special Olympics, and being a Guardian Ad Litem, Lara Kolb has gained valuable experience working directly with adult learners, understanding the barriers they face, and developing strategies to promote lifelong learning. Lara has collaborated with local organizations, policymakers, and community leaders to raise awareness about the importance of family and adult literacy and the need for more accessible, equitable education options. Lara Kolb is eager to expand her advocacy efforts through the COABE State Advocacy Fellowship. By participating in this fellowship, she aims to deepen her understanding of policy and advocacy, build stronger connections with stakeholders, and amplify her impact on the adult education field. Through her work, Lara hopes to contribute to positive change in adult education systems both locally and nationally.



Tennessee

Kirsten Albritton

Meharry Medical College, C.A.P.E. Program

Kirsten J. Albritton is a passionate advocate and dedicated leader in the field of education, with over a decade of experience spanning K-5 instruction, intervention, and adult education. As the Program Director for the Connecting Adults to Professions and Education (C.A.P.E.) program at Meharry Medical College, Kirsten oversees initiatives designed to remove barriers to learning and empower adult learners to achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals. Kirsten began her career as a K-5 teacher and interventionist, where she implemented equitable teaching strategies and provided targeted support to diverse student populations. Her work in early education fueled her passion for addressing systemic inequities and inspired her transition into adult education, where she now focuses on creating opportunities for underserved communities. In her current role, she leads a team to deliver innovative, learner-centered programming and



collaborates with stakeholders to expand access to education and workforce development resources. Kirsten is also deeply engaged in advocacy. She is a graduate of the Equity Alliance LiberTea Collective and the Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance (TECA) Advocacy Academy, where she honed her skills in policy development and grassroots mobilization. Additionally, she serves as Chair of the Community Engagement Working Group for the GOAL Collective, connecting communities with resources and opportunities to support lifelong learning. A graduate of Liberty University with a master's degree in Human Services Counseling, Kirsten is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in Adult Education at Capella University.

Texas

Irene Ramos

Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education

Irene Ramos has dedicated over 34 years to advancing adult education and workforce training, serving in a variety of impactful roles including instructor, coordinator, staff development trainer, Center Manager, and Program Manager. With a unique blend of experience across the workforce, adult education, and civic leadership spheres, she brings a comprehensive perspective to each initiative she leads. Ramos holds a bachelor's degree from Our Lady of the Lake University and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio. Most recently, she served as the Program Manager for Crossroads Adult Education at ESC Region 2 in Corpus Christi. In this role, she designed and built the program from the ground up, transforming it into a successful model for adult education in the region. Over the past six years, Ramos has worked tirelessly to rebrand adult education in the Coastal Bend area, forging partnerships with key stakeholders to elevate the program's visibility and impact. A lifelong resident of Poteet, Texas, Ramos has been married to her husband, Ed, for 35 years and is the proud mother of three accomplished children. Her commitment to community, education, and family is evident in all facets of her work and life.



Utah

Katie Donoviel

English Skills Learning Center

Katie Donoviel is the Executive Director of the English Skills Learning Center (ESLC) in Utah, where she leads efforts to empower adult English learners through innovative education programs. With over 14 years of experience in education, Katie is deeply committed to breaking barriers and creating opportunities for learners to achieve their goals. Katie holds a master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language and has worked extensively with adult learners from diverse backgrounds, including refugees and immigrants. Under her leadership, the ESLC has expanded both its reach and impact. Katie is a passionate advocate for the preservation of heritage languages alongside English language acquisition, ensuring learners can thrive while maintaining cultural connections. Katie's work emphasizes a strengths-based approach to education, focusing on the unique assets and potential of each learner. Her dedication has resulted in transformative outcomes for learners, from improved literacy to career advancement and community integration. Katie is also an active presenter at several local, national, and international conferences. Her passion for adult education drives her mission to create a more equitable and inclusive society.



Virginia

Andrea Clements

Region 5 Adult Education, Virginia

After receiving a B.S. in Nonprofit Communications and Spanish from James Madison University, Andrea stepped into the transformative position of Migrant Education Liaison for Shenandoah County, Virginia. First, she simply listened to the



stories of migrant workers in the apple fields who did not yet have a voice in their community. Only then was she able to advocate for their right to literacy, which began opening many new doors to them. This experience ignited her passion for promoting equitable access to education within underserved communities and drove her to pursue a Master's in Teaching English, ESL, and Spanish from James Madison University. Andrea fully immersed herself in a new culture in Madrid, Spain where she taught her first English classes targeted to adult professors within the bilingual education model as well as created a business English curriculum for professionals in Madrid. She earned her Bilingual Education Certificate from the University of Comillas. Andrea continued pursuing education upon moving back to the United States by teaching ELLs at a predominantly Latino high school in Northern Virginia. Currently, Andrea is the Regional Specialist and a GED instructor for the Region 5 Adult Education Program which serves a large portion of Southwest Virginia. She is particularly passionate about empowering students not only by providing them with robust literacy foundations but by helping them take the next step towards a certification program or enrollment in a local college. Andrea serves on the VAACE Advocacy Committee in which she works with local partners and legislators to ensure adult education is a top priority in Virginia.

Washington

Ahmed Fahad

Highline College

Ahmed Fahad is an educator, advocate, and leader in the field of adult education, with extensive experience in teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) and supporting immigrant and refugee learners. A faculty member in the ELCAP Department at Highline College in Washington, Ahmed specializes in culturally responsive teaching, integrating technology, and fostering equitable learning environments. His work is deeply rooted in advocacy for adult learners and aligns with his passion for creating pathways to success for underserved communities. Ahmed's commitment to adult education extends beyond the classroom. As a participant in the Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) framework and a member of the Welcome Campus Network, he has implemented innovative strategies to address critical topics like digital literacy, workforce preparation, and financial literacy for adult learners. At Highline College, he co-authored an Open Educational Resource (OER) textbook designed to meet the unique needs of advanced ESOL students, ensuring equitable access to high-quality learning materials. Active in professional organizations, Ahmed serves on the board of the Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages (WAESOL) and is a member of the Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE). His advocacy efforts include presenting at state and national conferences, publishing peer-reviewed articles, and organizing events that amplify the voices of adult learners. Ahmed's experiences as an immigrant and former ESL student drive his passion for using education as a tool for empowerment. Through the COABE State Advocacy Fellowship, Ahmed seeks to expand his impact by engaging with policymakers, mobilizing community support, and advancing adult education policies at local, state, and national levels.



West Virginia

Heather Tharp

Southern Educational Service Cooperative

Heather Tharp is a dedicated and passionate professional from Summersville, WV, with over 9 years of experience in Adult Education. A proud graduate of Marshall University, Heather has built a rewarding career centered around empowering individuals to achieve both academic and career success. Throughout her career, Heather has held a variety of key roles within the West Virginia Adult Education and SPOKES program. She has served as an Adult Education Instructor, SPOKES Instructor, CPR/First Aid Instructor, Mental Health Awareness Instructor, and WVSSAC Coach. Currently, she works as a Career Development Consultant, helping adult learners enhance their career opportunities and build successful futures. She is committed to providing opportunities for growth, personal development, and career advancement. She believes in the transformative power of education and works tirelessly to help students navigate their educational journeys while preparing them



for meaningful careers. In addition to her professional work, Heather is an active community member, supporting both youth and adult learners. Her dedication to service and making a difference extends beyond the classroom, and she continues to inspire and uplift those around her. Heather is a true advocate for Adult Education, continually working to enhance the lives of learners and contribute to the success of her community.

Wisconsin

Dana Glasstein

Waukesha County Technical College

Dana Glasstein has been an English as a Second Language instructor at Waukesha County Technical College in Pewaukee, Wisconsin for 18 years. She teaches all levels of adult ESL students and support courses in the Healthcare Integrated Education and Training (IET) program. Ms. Glasstein served on the state committee that updated the Wisconsin Technical College System's ESL curriculum to align with WIOA standards, and serves as her department's representative for continuous improvement in the areas of Student Learning Evidence and Critical Life Skills attainment. She is passionate about Adult Education and student success, and has served as a student mentor and on a variety of college committees. As a dedicated advocate for Adult Education in her community, Ms. Glasstein has served as a Board Director and Vice President at her local community-based literacy organization, and she continues to volunteer as an educational consultant. Ms. Glasstein believes in the importance of community activism, and ran for Wisconsin State Assembly in 2024 with support for public education as one of her main priorities. She holds a M.A. in English for TESOL and a B.A. in East Asian Languages.



Wyoming

Rochelle Hampton

Casper College

Rochelle is an instructor in ABE at the Castellow Adult Learning Center at Casper College in Wyoming. She is a board member of WYLLA. She received a Master of Science degree in Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Colorado and is certified to teach Special Education and Secondary Language Arts.

